
THE ART OF
MAGIC
The Gathering®
INNISTRAD



Nearheath Stalker ➢ Michael C. Hayes

THE ART OF
MAGIC The Gathering®
INNISTRAD

The Art of *Magic: The Gathering*®
Innistrad
Perfect Square Edition

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Credits—Wizards of the Coast®
Writing: James Wyatt, with an appendix by Aaron Forsythe
Based on Prior Work by: Doug Beyer, Brady Dommermuth, Jenna Helland, Matt Knicl, Adam Lee, Ari Levitch, Sam Stoddard, and Richard Whitters
Art Director: Dawn Murin
Cover Art: Adam Paquette
Magic Creative Team: Jenna Helland and Colin Kawakami (leads), Pamela Ansman-Wolfe, Doug Beyer, Sam Burley, Kelly Digges, Tyler Jacobson, Kimberly Kreines, Liz Leo, Ari Levitch, Melissa Li, Dawn Murin, Cynthia Sheppard, Mark Winters, James Wyatt
Magic R&D Leads: Aaron Forsythe (senior director), Mark Rosewater (set design), Mark Globus (product design), Jeremy Jarvis (creative), Erik Lauer (development), and Ken Troop (director of operations)
Brand Management: Elaine Chase (senior director), Mark Purvis (director), Brian Trunk, Adam B. Colby, Liz Lamb-Ferro, April Glass, and Matthew Danner
Project Manager: William Ansell

Credits—VIZ Media
Lead Designer: Sam Elzway
Lead Design Support: Fawn Lau
Senior Editorial Director: Elizabeth Kawasaki
Senior Editor: Joel Enos

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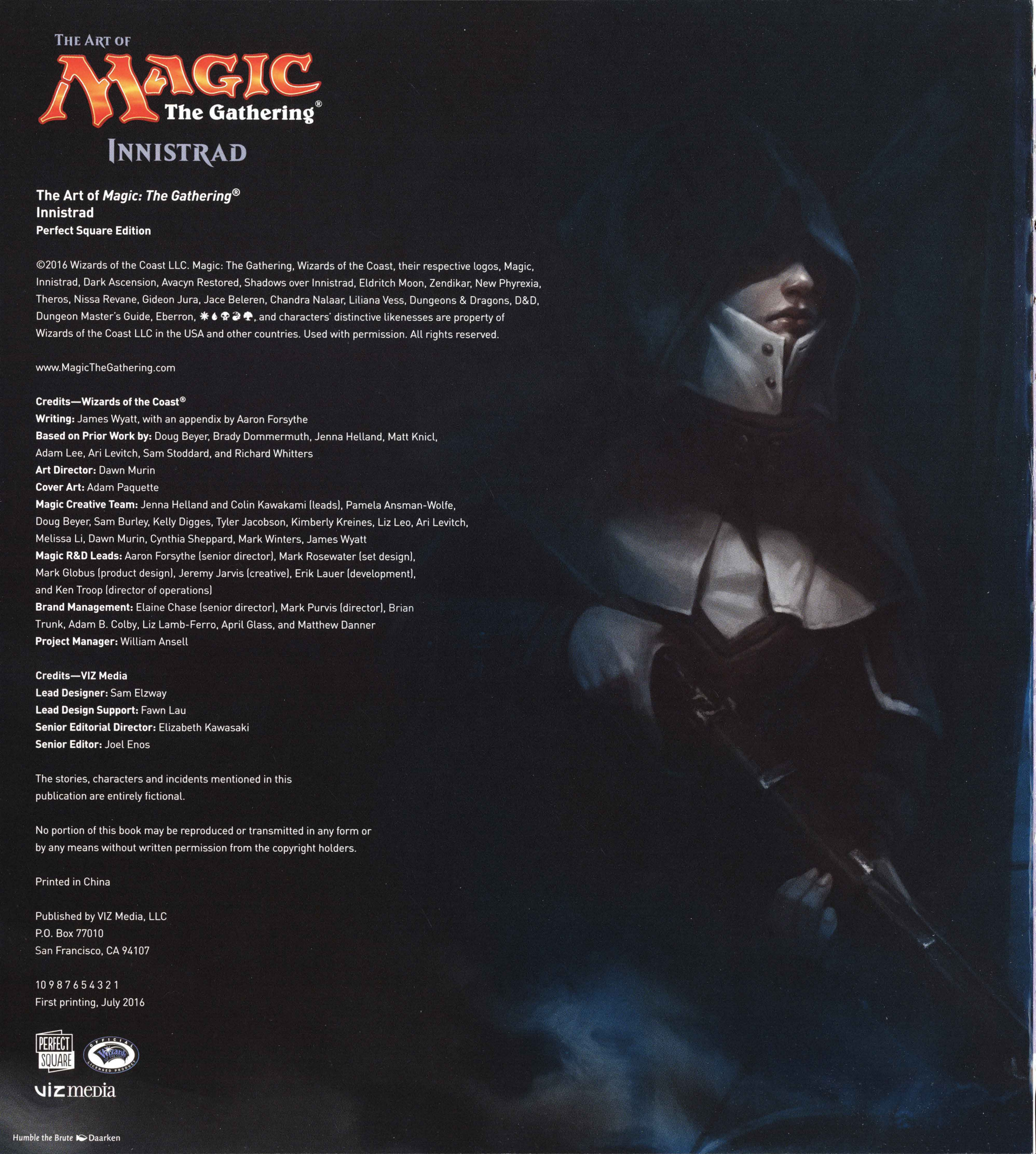

Humble the Brute Daarken



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Preface

Innistrad is how I finally got hooked into Magic, once and for all.

By the time the first *Innistrad* card set was unleashed upon the Magic Multiverse, I had been working at Wizards of the Coast for almost a dozen years, but my focus had been on Dungeons & Dragons all that time. I was aware of Magic, I dabbled in it from time to time, and I started playing more with the *Zendikar* block. But in 2011, all the stars were aligned: my daughter was old enough to play seriously, a critical mass of my friends on the D&D team were interested in playing, and Innistrad happened.

Innistrad is a world of lurking nightmares that puts a distinctive Magic spin on classic horror tropes, from vampires and werewolves to mad cultists who serve alien beings from beyond the stars. I love that stuff. Innistrad spoke my language. That first block of three card releases—*Innistrad*, *Dark Ascension*, and *Avacyn Restored*—made me a Magic player for life. These sets revealed the story of a dark plane under the protection of a mighty archangel . . . and what happened when that archangel disappeared.

Then in 2014, when I moved over and started working on the Magic team, right away I started working on the next Innistrad block. *Shadows over Innistrad* continues the story as the archangel descends into murderous madness, and then the mysterious cause of her madness is revealed in all its horrible glory in *Eldritch Moon*.

For me, writing this book was like coming home. I got to immerse myself in the horrors of this world, experience its art in all its sinister majesty, and tell its fascinating and disturbing story. I hope that opening this book gives you the same feeling . . . even if "home" is a creepy mansion full of fleeting shadows and nameless things in the cellar.

Welcome to Innistrad. Won't you stay for dinner?

—James Wyatt



Maw of the Mire ➭ Vincent Proce

What is *Magic: The Gathering*®?

Magic: The Gathering® is a tradable card game (TCG) where players build collections of cards, assemble decks, and battle against each other. Abstractly, the game represents a duel between powerful mages, each casting mighty spells and summoning monstrous creatures in an effort to defeat the other. These mages are called Planeswalkers because they possess the rare ability to travel from plane to plane within a vast Multiverse, and their great power comes from their ability to draw on magic from all those planes.

Planeswalkers and the Multiverse

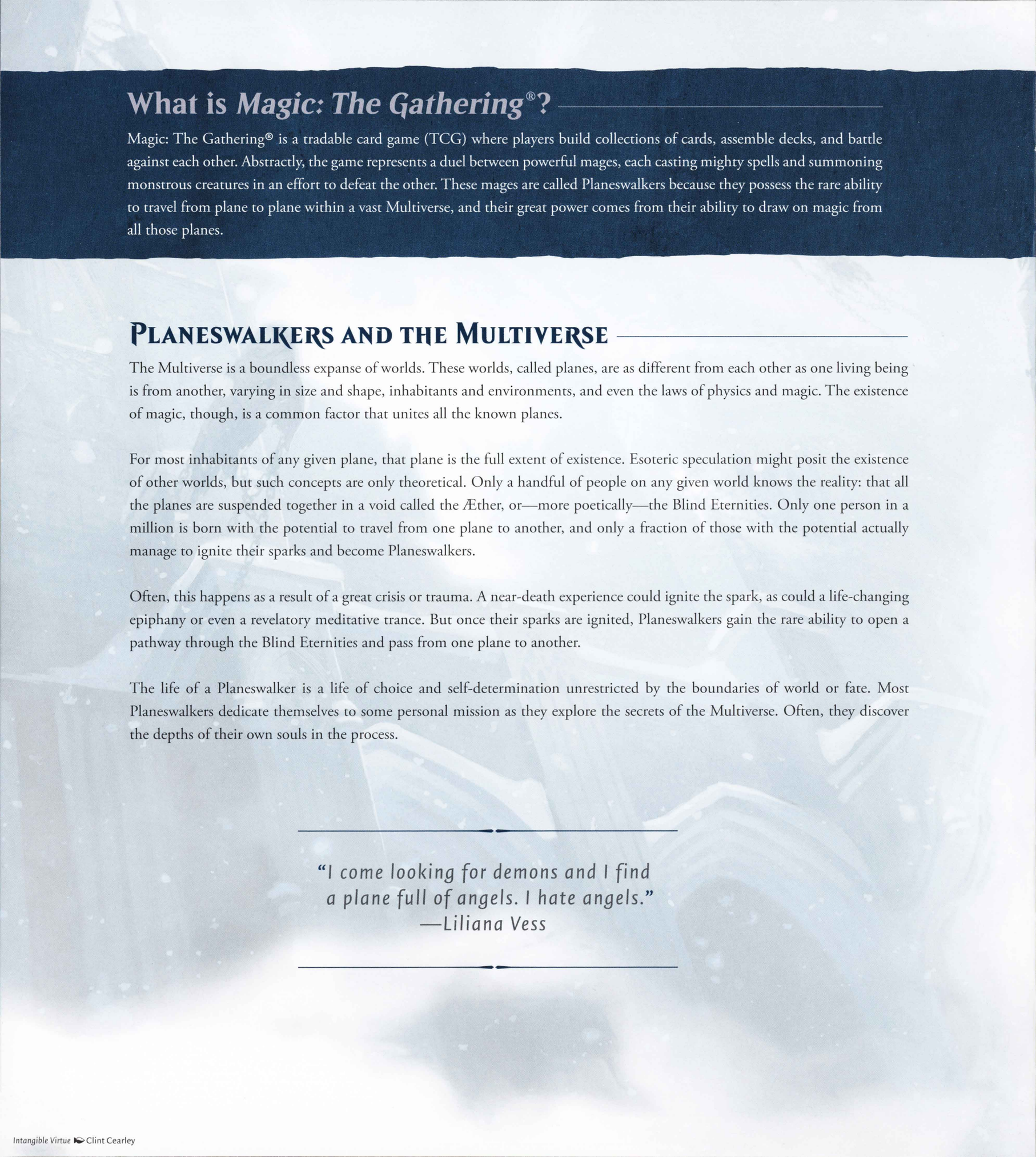
The Multiverse is a boundless expanse of worlds. These worlds, called planes, are as different from each other as one living being is from another, varying in size and shape, inhabitants and environments, and even the laws of physics and magic. The existence of magic, though, is a common factor that unites all the known planes.

For most inhabitants of any given plane, that plane is the full extent of existence. Esoteric speculation might posit the existence of other worlds, but such concepts are only theoretical. Only a handful of people on any given world knows the reality: that all the planes are suspended together in a void called the Æther, or—more poetically—the Blind Eternities. Only one person in a million is born with the potential to travel from one plane to another, and only a fraction of those with the potential actually manage to ignite their sparks and become Planeswalkers.

Often, this happens as a result of a great crisis or trauma. A near-death experience could ignite the spark, as could a life-changing epiphany or even a revelatory meditative trance. But once their sparks are ignited, Planeswalkers gain the rare ability to open a pathway through the Blind Eternities and pass from one plane to another.

The life of a Planeswalker is a life of choice and self-determination unrestricted by the boundaries of world or fate. Most Planeswalkers dedicate themselves to some personal mission as they explore the secrets of the Multiverse. Often, they discover the depths of their own souls in the process.

> *"I come looking for demons and I find a plane full of angels. I hate angels."*
> *—Liliana Vess*



Intangible Virtue Clint Cearley

Planes of the Multiverse

The full extent of the Multiverse is unknowable. Among the countless planes, these are only a small sample.



Dominaria

Home to the volcanic continent of Shiv, the time-shattered isle of Tolaria, and the cold mountains of Keld, Dominaria is the setting for some of the Multiverse's most brutal conflicts and home to some of its most powerful mages.

James Paick



Zendikar

This land of primal mana was lethal before the Eldrazi that were bound there escaped from their prison. Now colossal predators from the Æther are devouring everything in their path.

Sam Burley



New Phyrexia

Once known as Mirrodin, this metallic plane has been transformed by the vile Phyrexian corruption. Its natives fought and lost the war for their world and now struggle to survive each day.

Tomasz Jedruszek



Ravnica

This worldwide cityscape holds countless grand halls, decrepit slums, and ancient ruins. Ten guilds maintain an uneasy peace in governing the various aspects of life in the majestic city.

Richard Wright



Shandalar

Rich with mana, Shandalar is a place where magic flows freely. Planeswalkers seek out this plane for its plentiful, powerful magic.

John Severin Brassell



Theros

Theros is ruled by an awe-inspiring pantheon of gods. Mortals tremble before them, feel the sting of their petty whims, and live in terror of their wrath.

Jung Park



Swamp Jung Park

Innistrad

On this plane, humanity is terrorized by vampires, werewolves, zombies, and ghouls. For centuries, the archangel Avacyn and her hosts protected the beleaguered humans, but then she disappeared. Avacyn has finally returned, but what new evils have come with her?

The Colors of Magic

All the planes of the Multiverse are suffused with mana, the energy that fuels magic in all its forms. Mana is intricately linked with the physical world, and different types of terrain produce different "colors" of mana. Most mages specialize in the use of one or perhaps two colors of mana and the particular types of magical effects that mana can create.



The World of Innistrad





Ghost Quarter ➤ Peter Mohrbacher



Falkenrath Noble ➢ Slawomir Maniak

The World

On the world of Innistrad, horrors stalk in the shadows and scratch at the door in the night. Humanity is beset on all sides: vampires thirst for human blood, werewolves live for the thrill of the hunt, the restless spirits of the dead haunt the living, and no corpse is safe from reanimation at the hands of cruel necromancers or cunning scientists. Only their grim determination—and their staunch faith in the protection of their patron archangel, Avacyn—allows humans to survive in this nightmarish realm.

"As long as we can utter a prayer or lift a weapon, we have the power to fight back."
—Thalia, Knight-Cathar

The story of Innistrad is partly the story of the vampire Planeswalker Sorin Markov. Oddly enough, Sorin is not the source of the horrors of Innistrad's night, but the creator of the archangel who protects humanity. His grandfather was the plane's first vampire, and in order to prevent the extermination of humans—the vampires' only food source—Sorin created Avacyn to give the humans a fighting chance. To help the archangel deal with threats that could not be destroyed, Sorin made the Helvault, a great silver monolith that for centuries served as a prison for demons and other powerful horrors. And unwittingly, Sorin set into motion the chain of events that would threaten the very existence of his home plane by imprisoning his fellow Planeswalker, Nahiri the Lithomancer, in the Helvault.

Innistrad's recent years have been tumultuous. First the demon Griselbrand trapped Avacyn in the Helvault with him, weakening the strength of the rites that invoked her and lowering humanity's defenses against the horrors of the night. When the situation was at its worst, with zombie armies marching on the high city of Thraben, the Helvault was sundered and Avacyn was released. But no sooner had Avacyn restored some measure of peace and balance to the plane than Nahiri, also freed from the Helvault, began to spin Innistrad toward its doom.

And so Innistrad's protector turned her wrath upon the humans she was meant to protect. The angels were gripped with madness, and some greater madness seemed to be worming its way into the minds of Innistrad's people—as well as the enemies of humanity. The threat went far deeper than the crazed angels and the equally crazed inquisitors who acted in their name, and the fate of all Innistrad hung in the balance.

Endless Ranks of the Dead ➢ Ryan Yee





Demonic Taskmaster ➧ Chris Rahn

Horrors of the Night

The people of Innistrad are surrounded by monsters. Almost without exception, anything that is not human, whether it's a rat or an angel, is a potential enemy. Even the traditional allies of humanity—from angels and gryffs to herons and hounds—are unreliable at best, as the madness that grips the angels seems to seep into every living thing. And humans' age-old enemies grow still more dangerous.

The specific horrors that the people of Innistrad fear most are all reflections of humanity's darker nature. Werewolves are a living embodiment of the secret rage and violence that hide in the human heart. Vampires are the bodily manifestation of carnal desire, hedonistic cravings, and bloodlust. Taken together, zombies and geists—the restless spirits of the dead—paint in the starkest terms the eventual future of all people, the grim reality of human mortality. And demons are the unholy inversion of humans' spiritual longings, the shadow side of the angels' brightness.

Perhaps the most dreadful creatures of Innistrad, though, lurk within the towns and cities of humanity, pursuing their twisted schemes and unholy desires right in the heart of civilization. They are humans themselves. Sinister cultists give themselves over to demons and other dark forces. Depraved necromancers raise the dead to do their bidding. Obsessive scholars pry into secrets best left hidden. Crazed scientists toy with the forces of life and death in their efforts to create artificial life or harness the energy that remains in the spirits of the dead. And some humans—on Innistrad as on every plane—simply give in to their own selfish desires and violent rage, killing with knife and garrote rather than sorcery.

"When you're on watch, no noise is harmless and no shadow can be ignored."
—Olgard of the Skiltfolk

Defenders of Humanity

Humanity is not without protectors in this nightmare land, the foremost of which have always been the angels. Led by the glorious archangel Avacyn, the hosts of angels, though few in number, have long stood with the people of Innistrad to face the horrors of the night.

Except in the rare cases where the angels directly involve themselves in combat with monsters, their power is mediated through the Church of Avacyn, which serves as both spiritual and temporal authority in the four provinces of Innistrad. The priests of the church perform ritual blessings on the faithful and their homes to ward off evil, and the church's soldiers and inquisitors actively hunt vampires and werewolves that prey on the people in their charge.

But that was before Avacyn went mad. Suddenly, the searing fury of Avacyn—usually reserved for the greatest foes of humanity—was turned on villages full of apparently innocent people. Angels under Avacyn's leadership impaled the innocent on their spears and scoured the earth with celestial fire. Convinced that the sins of humanity brought the angels' wrath down on them, Avacyn's church took up the archangel's cause and sought to purge all sin through their own methods of inquisition and execution.

With even the angels and the church turned against humanity, few were left to take up arms against these evils. Here and there, renegade cathars disobeyed the mandate of the church and continued to hunt vampires and werewolves instead of punishing the innocent. But increasingly, the common folk—farmers with their pitchforks, smiths with their hammers, even retired soldiers taking battle-worn swords down from their place above the mantle—discovered new reserves of strength and resiliency to stand against the horrors of the night, even when those horrors were parish priests and holy knights.

Goldnight Commander ➢ Chris Rahn



Avacyn and the Angelic Host





Entreat the Angels Todd Lockwood



Avacyn, Angel of Hope

Avacyn was the archangel of Innistrad, revered across the plane as the source of hope, of protection, and of the Blessed Rest—a peaceful eternity of slumber in the grave. She offered the faithful efficacious magical wards against vampires and werewolves, a tranquil oblivion rather than the damned fate of a tormented spirit or undead abomination, and a distant hope that someday, their descendants might live in an Innistrad free from all the horrors of darkness.

"Avacyn's protection is everywhere. From the holy church to the sacred glade, all that we see is under her blessed watch."
—Hildin, Priest of Avacyn

Avacyn was a warrior angel. Armed with a gleaming silver spear tipped with a double blade that incorporated her symbol, she did battle with vampires and werewolves, put geists and zombies to eternal rest, and wrestled with demons. She could not be everywhere at once, and even her angelic hosts were too few to take a personal hand in the protection of all Innistrad's people, but her church acted as an extension of her power, both martial and magical.

The church taught that Avacyn has always been, that she adopted Innistrad as her ward, that she was the source of all protective magic, and that she controlled the seasons and brought an end to the bleak season of Hunter's Moon. The truth of her nature and origin remains a secret known to only a handful, including the vampire Planeswalker Sorin Markov.



Avacyn, Guardian Angel ➪ Winona Nelson

Sorin Markov

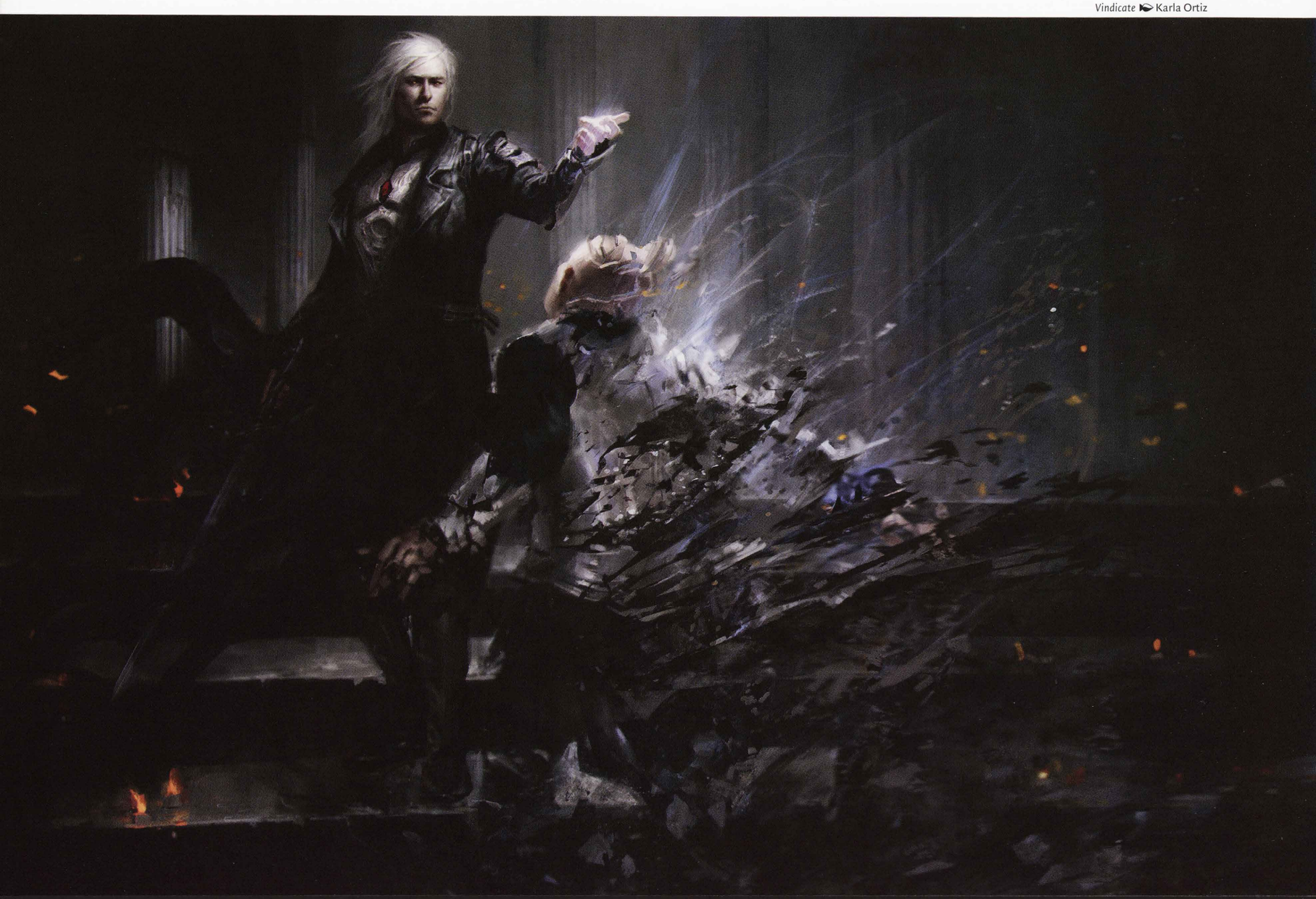
The ancient vampire Sorin Markov was born on Innistrad, where his grandfather was the progenitor of the vampire race. He is a Planeswalker, and though he is no longer welcomed by his family, he still considers Innistrad to be home. Over the course of thousands of years, he has gone to extraordinary lengths to protect his home.

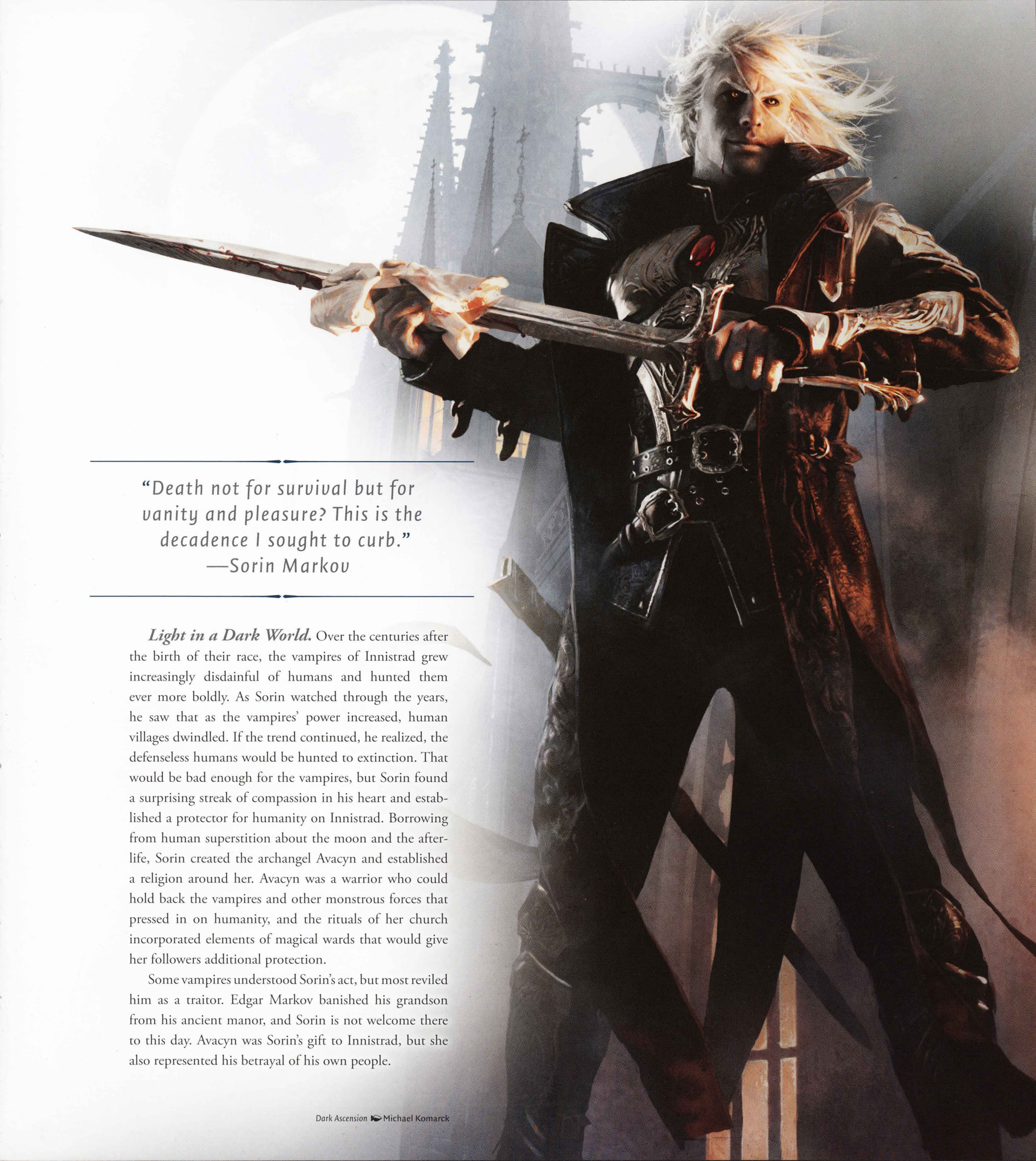
Birthed in Blood. Thousands of years ago, Edgar Markov was an alchemist and healer in a land that was not quite so dark, a plane where vampires did not yet exist. As old age began to claim him, he despaired of finding an alchemical means of prolonging his life and turned instead to black magic. Not long after, the demon Shilgengar appeared to Markov and revealed a means by which Markov could achieve immortality: a dark ritual of blood magic that involved drinking an angel's blood. Thus were vampires born on Innistrad, and the first of Edgar's vampiric bloodline was his grandson, Sorin.

Blood Magic. Sorin's magic is intricately linked to his vampiric nature. He practices the magical art of sangromancy—blood magic. By draining the blood of another person, he can transfer life force and health to himself. He can prevent blood from clotting and wounds from healing, inflicting lasting curses that lead to wasting and death. And he can even control others' blood, and thereby their thoughts and actions.

Immortal Pleasures. As the grandson of the honored progenitor of the vampire race on Innistrad, Sorin is accustomed to living a comfortable life. Like many of Innistrad's vampires, he tries to ease the tedium of his ageless existence with the finest pleasures of life, but he is less inclined to decadence and overindulgence than many of his kin. His vast experience on countless planes has given him access to more delights than any vampire on Innistrad could ever imagine, but it has also shown him the vast potential of humans and other mortal races. Rather than looking down on humans as mere cattle, as most vampires on Innistrad do, he finds them endearing—and important, beyond merely being sources of food.

Vindicate ➪ Karla Ortiz





"Death not for survival but for vanity and pleasure? This is the decadence I sought to curb."
—Sorin Markov

Light in a Dark World. Over the centuries after the birth of their race, the vampires of Innistrad grew increasingly disdainful of humans and hunted them ever more boldly. As Sorin watched through the years, he saw that as the vampires' power increased, human villages dwindled. If the trend continued, he realized, the defenseless humans would be hunted to extinction. That would be bad enough for the vampires, but Sorin found a surprising streak of compassion in his heart and established a protector for humanity on Innistrad. Borrowing from human superstition about the moon and the afterlife, Sorin created the archangel Avacyn and established a religion around her. Avacyn was a warrior who could hold back the vampires and other monstrous forces that pressed in on humanity, and the rituals of her church incorporated elements of magical wards that would give her followers additional protection.

Some vampires understood Sorin's act, but most reviled him as a traitor. Edgar Markov banished his grandson from his ancient manor, and Sorin is not welcome there to this day. Avacyn was Sorin's gift to Innistrad, but she also represented his betrayal of his own people.

Dark Ascension Michael Komarck



The Lunarch's Journal

It has been years since I have held a quill, but I am compelled to record the terrible secret I have discovered, and how it came to my hands. I would be killed for this heresy, and although I have no fear of death, it may be a preferable fate. For this is madness, surely, a vacuum of truth where I am now sealed.

The journal was bound with a spell I recognized as of the Nightfall Cathars, and a moon passed before I solved it. Initially, I was joyous to have found such an artifact, and I told myself that I would announce the discovery after I familiarized myself with its contents.

I wasn't surprised by the first revelation: Avacyn had been sealed in the Helvault with the demon Griselbrand, and during that time our power had diminished. This was known only to Mikaeus and the highest Devisers, a secret they kept to prevent unrest in the congregation.

But the passage that pushed me toward apostasy was far worse.

From the Journal of Mikaeus, Lunarch of the Church of Avacyn

Countless eons ago, E. Markov brokered the blasphemy that created his foul race of vampires. With the demon Shilgengar, he devised a formula to transform living men into these monsters that fed upon their own brothers and sisters. The key ingredient was the blood of a living angel.

Markov and his sons trapped the angel Marycz in his laboratory and exsanguinated her before preparing the unholy decoction that set in motion a cycle of fear and predation that we suffer under today.

Humans were fighting a losing battle. The vampires were simply too powerful, and after generations of multiplication, they had come to nearly outnumber us.

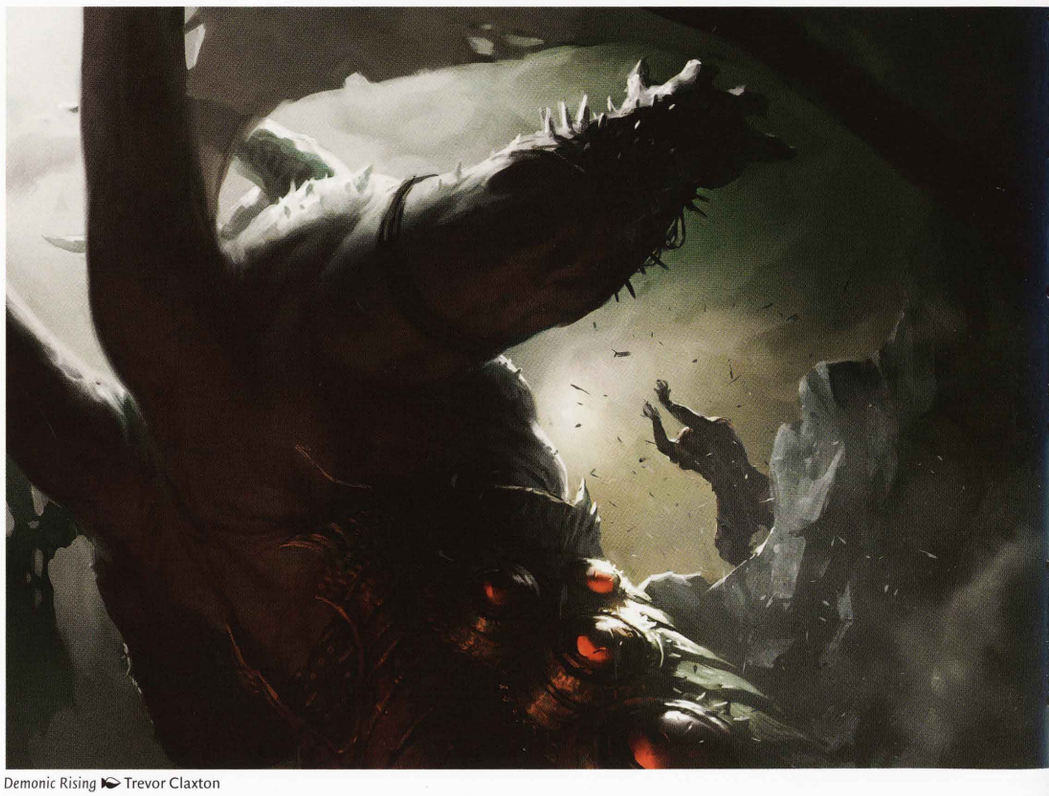
Each battle the vampires won, each human life they took, served to weaken them, whereas our own victories were victories for us both. This war was not between human and vampire. We were allies against a common foe: the vampires' own hunger.

It is a cruel symmetry that our salvation was born of the Markov family, S. Markov, a creature so ancient and powerful that he survives even today. Seeing that our destruction and theirs were inexorably linked, Sorin created Avacyn, a force to rally our remaining angels, a force that we could unite under.

A force constructed to hold in check the very vampires who created her.

From there, the church was designed to give us the power to protect and grow our numbers, but not enough to ever bring us victory over those that fed on us . . .

—From "The Lunarch's Journal," by Colin Kawakami



Demonic Rising ➪ Trevor Claxton



Mikaeus, the Lunarch ➢ Steven Belledin



Bruna, Light of Alabaster ▶ Winona Nelson

Flights of Angels

Traditionally, three groups of angels, called flights or hosts, served Avacyn, each under the leadership of a lesser archangel.

Flight Alabaster

The practical and sympathetic angels of Flight Alabaster were instrumental in maintaining Avacyn's wards against the supernatural evils of Innistrad. They preferred the use of spells to weapons, and engaged in battle only when they had exhausted other options. As a result, angels of other flights sometimes dismissed them as overly sentimental.

Flight Alabaster's angels lived in the lofts of Thraben Cathedral, making them a familiar sight to the inhabitants of the city. In their work, they aided priests and cathars in maintaining the protective wards on the city walls and at holy sites throughout the plane. As a result, they were the first angels to recognize that the wards were failing during Avacyn's absence, and thus increased their efforts to reinforce those protections. These efforts helped spare Thraben from the fate that befell many other towns and settlements during that period.

Alabaster angels also aided Avacyn in conducting the spirits of the dead to their ultimate fate, dissolving into Innistrad's Æthereal essence. When the angels were present and powerful, most spirits passed peacefully away, allowing the deceased to enjoy the Blessed Sleep of a peaceful eternity. Only those spirits fueled by anguish, hatred, or regret were able to resist the angels' guidance and the pull of the Æther. During Avacyn's absence, however, the angels of Flight Alabaster were lax in carrying out this task, and though many spirits still found their way to the Æther, a large number lingered in the world, even benevolent spirits who longed to help their living relatives and friends against the terrors of the darkness.

The leader of Flight Alabaster was Bruna, called the Light of Alabaster.

"Why do the dead remain among us? Where is Flight Alabaster to lead them home? Where is Avacyn?" —Eruth of Lambholt

Host of Herons

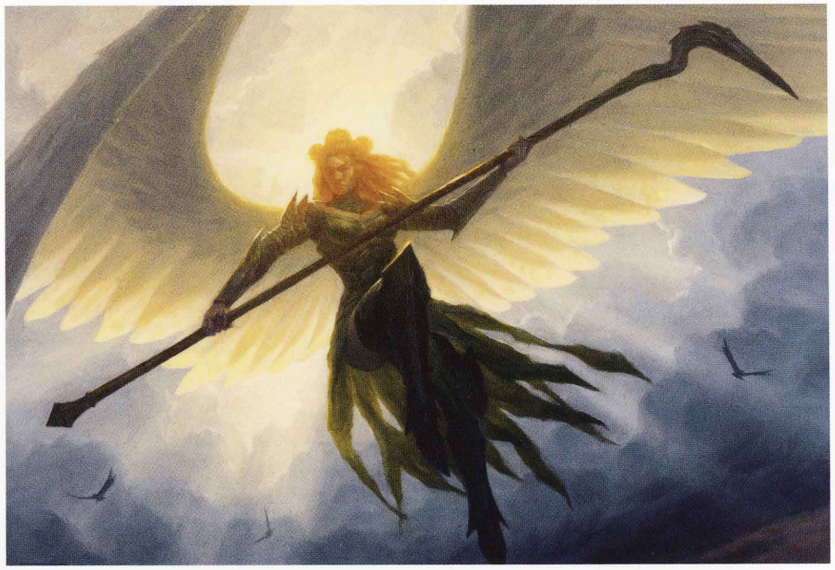
The Host of Herons were the angels of birth, rebirth, and purity. Their magic was said to ward humans against harm in life. This was always the smallest flight of angels, and its primary function had been scouting and tracking werewolves and other marauding monsters. When Avacyn disappeared, they moved their home from Thraben to Videns, a holy site in the far reaches of the Gavony province. The angels of this flight continued to travel through remote areas, trying to prop up the failing wards in regions far beyond the safety of Thraben.

Because they were closer to Kessig than the other flights, the Heron angels were instrumental in the inquisition against werewolves. They worked closely with the cathars stationed in Kessig. In the final days before Avacyn's return, ferocious howlpacks ran wild over Kessig, forcing countless humans to take up residence in walled settlements protected by too few angels and cathars. The Host of Herons focused its efforts on facing this threat, and its presence saved untold lives.

Of all the flights, the Herons were the closest to giving up on Avacyn during her absence. They believed they would have to turn to forces in nature for new sources of power and security.

The leader of the Host of Herons was Sigarda, who wielded a scythe shaped like the head of a heron.

Sigarda, Host of Herons ➢ Chris Rahn



Requiem Angel ➢ Eric Deschamps



Flight Goldnight

Flight Goldnight was an army of soldier-angels focused on the martial strength of the church. These angels were characterized by pragmatism and strict observance of church law. They were strategists in battle and skillful leaders during armed conflicts, cultivating a martial mindset that made them more than willing to take up arms when the need arose.

Flight Goldnight's home was the Elgaud Grounds in Nephalia, where they were a daily presence in the lives of new cathars of the church as they underwent their training. The angels dwelt in an imposing stronghold on a rocky crest overlooking the ocean, part church and part fortress, called Engelturm. The soldier-angels made their home in a series of narrow spires and interconnecting chambers in the upper levels of Engelturm. These rooms were forbidden to all but the angels.

Because it was centered in Nephalia, Flight Goldnight dealt with stitchers and their skaab creations more frequently than other angels. Thus, these angels developed a fierce determination to destroy every trace of the undead and their twisted creators. During Avacyn's absence, groups of skaab-hunting Goldnight angels became known as "hatchet squads" by the skaberen and human criminal elements. Each such group had a contingent of cathars, soldiers of the church, who would hack up and burn the zombie corpses so they couldn't be revived again.

Gisela, Blade of Goldnight ➢ Jason Chan





Angelic Overseer ➢ Jason Chan

Any trials against heretics or criminals in the four provinces were presided over by a high priest, and an angel of Flight Goldnight always witnessed the proceedings. However, angels were not present at executions, which were carried out by nameless executioners.

Unlike angels from Flight Alabaster, the soldier-angels of Goldnight always traveled armed. When a new cathar regiment was posted in a remote region of Kessig or Stensia, an angel accompanied them on their journey. Angels were unable to remain too long in Stensia because of the comparative dearth of Avacyn's wards in that area, however. After even a couple of days in the province, an angel's resolve would weaken dramatically.

The leader of Flight Goldnight was Gisela, called the Blade of Goldnight or the Blade of the Church. She and most other Goldnight angels were steadfast—blindly so—in their denial that Avacyn had disappeared. Avacyn was on a mission, they insisted. She knew exactly what she was doing and would soon return. This faith was rewarded with the shattering of the Helvault. Gisela's power not only returned, it increased dramatically. She was tasked with continuing the crusade against necromancers and their legions of undead, which she embraced with fervor and devotion.



Archangel Avacyn ➽ James Ryman



Avacyn and the Helvault

The city of Thraben stands at the edge of a precipice where the river Kirch plummets into the sea far below. Perched on the cliff top there once stood a huge silver monolith, enfolded within the twin branches of the Cathedral of Avacyn. The monolith stood on that cliff long before the cathedral was built, and even before the first human settlement was erected on the site of Thraben. Popular imagination claimed that it was a fragment of the moon, broken off by Avacyn and brought to the ground as a prison for her foes. The truth of its origin remains unknown even to Sorin, and though it was closely connected to Avacyn, the archangel did not create it.

"What cannot be destroyed will be bound." —Oath of Avacyn

This was the Helvault, which for a thousand years held the powerful enemies of humanity bound in stasis. When Sorin created Avacyn, he drew on the magical qualities of the monolith's so-called moonsilver, which had power to both ward off and harm vampires and werewolves, and imbued the archangel with similar power. And he infused the Helvault itself—already the object of superstitious devotion by the humans who dwelled in nearby villages—with the binding magic that Avacyn could use to imprison her foes.

As Avacyn set about her appointed task of preserving Innistrad's human population, she destroyed many vampires with her moonsilver spear, but she also faced powerful enemies that could not be so easily slain. The more powerful demons of the plane would not succumb to her destructive power—each time she destroyed one, it regenerated and reappeared elsewhere in the plane within a few weeks. So instead of killing them, she captured them and imprisoned them in the Helvault. Because of her role as captor of demons and other horrors, her symbol in the church was her collar, a device forged of moonsilver, which she used to hold demons fast until she could place them in the Helvault.

The Helvault held creatures in a spiritual stasis, reduced to their essence and bound in an extradimensional space. The creatures were only dimly aware of their surroundings and the passage of time. They experienced the presence of other inmates in the Helvault as vague sources of contained fury and concentrated malignity floating in general proximity. For the demons held inside for centuries, this experience had little effect on their already twisted and evil minds. But over the course of centuries, the Helvault contained two other souls who were much more powerfully affected by the experience. One was Nahiri, Sorin's Planeswalker ally, called the Lithomancer.

The other was Avacyn herself.



Helvault ➪ Jaime Jones

Nahiri and the Eldrazi

The Eldrazi are a race of interplanar beings that once traveled through the Blind Eternities, devouring whole planes and leaving mana-drained husks in their wake. Thousands of years ago, three Planeswalkers—Sorin Markov, Ugin the Spirit Dragon, and Nahiri the Lithomancer—worked together to imprison the three Eldrazi titans on the plane of Zendikar. The trio made a covenant to guard the Eldrazi's prison, to ensure that they were never again unleashed to continue their destruction of the Multiverse.

Nahiri remained on Zendikar, her home plane, to keep watch over the Eldrazi as Ugin and Sorin carried on with their business across the planes. The prison was not perfect, and after centuries of dormancy, the titans loosened their bonds enough to allow swarms of their spawn to emerge and dominate the world. Nahiri waited in vain for her partners to help her return the Eldrazi to their confinement, but neither Sorin nor Ugin arrived, so Nahiri was forced to stop the threat on her own.

"I'll go and find Sorin, wake him up if I need to, remind him of me and Zendikar and the friendship we once shared, remind him what it is to live, to feel, to care. I saved Zendikar, and now I will save him." —Nahiri

Concerned by Sorin's absence, Nahiri traveled to Innistrad to find him. When she arrived, Sorin dismissed her, preoccupied with the fate of humanity and his fellow vampires on Innistrad. As they spoke, Sorin's blatant disregard for the people of her plane infuriated her. She had feared that he was incapacitated or dead, but it was only apathy that had kept him from coming to Zendikar's aid. In his negligence, Sorin had allowed the Eldrazi to threaten her home plane, so she threatened to destroy Innistrad in return.

Sorin had no patience for Nahiri's tirade. He had only recently created Avacyn to keep the forces of light and dark in balance, and he couldn't listen to Nahiri threaten to undo it all. So he imprisoned Nahiri in the Helvault, where she would nurture her anger and hatred in terrible solitude for a thousand years—surrounded by the malign presence of hundreds of demons gnawing at the edges of her limited awareness. Once, near the end, a ray of light pierced the darkness of her prison—Avacyn, dragged into the Helvault with the demon Griselbrand—but it quickly dimmed, then went out.

Then everything changed. Seeking to destroy Griselbrand, Liliana Vess shattered the Helvault and every dark thing that had been imprisoned there streamed out, fleeing from the radiant glory of the risen archangel. Nahiri fled with the demons, returning to her native Zendikar.

What she found there, though, rekindled her rage into a consuming flame. The Eldrazi titans were free again—as she had predicted—and Ugin and Sorin had once again abdicated their duty to protect the plane. She knew that she could do nothing by herself to return the titans to their prison, so she concocted another plan, which would secure her revenge while simultaneously helping Zendikar: the fulfillment of her threat to destroy Innistrad.

Nahiri returned to Innistrad. Using her mastery of stone and earth, she created a vast pattern of twisted stone stretching across the four provinces. In some places—including Markov Manor, Sorin's ancestral estate—she warped existing buildings into elaborate, gravity-defying patterns. In other places, she drew rock from the ground and shaped it to suit her purposes. In every case, like the hedrons of Zendikar, these patterns channeled the mana of the plane, directing it all toward a single point off the coast of Nephalia. At that site, she began construction of a great stone ring intended to draw the Eldrazi titans through the Blind Eternities to Innistrad.

And thus she unleashed madness on a world already teetering on the brink of the Abyss.



Warped Landscape ➤ Cliff Childs



Nahiri, the Harbinger ◆ Aleksi Briclot

Griselbrand and Avacyn's Fall

Avacyn and the Helvault fulfilled their intended purpose on Innistrad for about a thousand years. After an initial crusade that resulted in the capture of many of Innistrad's lesser archdemons, her war simmered down to occasional skirmishes when a demon would emerge from hiding. Mostly, Avacyn and her angels focused their attention on vampires, werewolves, and zombies, and humanity flourished while the angels kept their foes at bay.

And then, one of the last remaining demon lords, the mighty Griselbrand, boldly challenged Avacyn. Perched atop the Helvault in grim defiance, he called out to the archangel and dared her to face him. Perhaps Griselbrand believed that he could succeed where every other demon had failed, destroying Avacyn and ruling Innistrad unchallenged. Or perhaps the battle was meant as a distraction, to keep the angels' attention on himself while his minions performed some other heinous deed in the shadows. It seems unlikely that Griselbrand actually planned to sacrifice himself in order to defeat Avacyn, but that is what occurred.

Avacyn rose to the challenge, of course, and battle was joined. The demon and the angel struggled together for four days. In the end, Avacyn drew on her last remaining reserves of strength and forced Griselbrand into the Helvault. But Griselbrand did not give up easily, and with his own last breath he drove his claw through Avacyn's chest and dragged her into the Helvault with him.

Only Lunarch Mikaeus—the head of Avacyn's church—and his most trusted bishops witnessed the battle and its terrible end. He struggled with what to do about Avacyn's imprisonment. Should he work on magic that could sunder the silver prison of the Helvault, potentially freeing Avacyn? The Helvault contained the world's savior, but it also imprisoned Griselbrand and the ranks upon ranks of unimaginable horrors that Avacyn had trapped over the years. Shattering the Helvault would free Avacyn, but release all those demons back into the world as well.

Perhaps worse, Avacyn was grievously wounded as she fell into the silver prison. Inside the timeless interior of the Helvault,

Dark Petition ➤ Igor Kieryluk





Avacyn, Angel of Hope ➧ Jason Chan

the artifact's magic bound her in a kind of stasis, keeping her alive when otherwise she might die from her wound. If Mikaeus found a way to break open the Helvault, he might complete Griselbrand's work and let Avacyn be destroyed forever.

More human concerns also influenced Mikaeus's actions. If the facts of Avacyn's disappearance were widely known, people across Innistrad might panic—and Mikaeus himself might lose his position of power and authority. Thus, the decision was made, and Mikaeus resolved to keep Avacyn's fate a secret. The effects of her imprisonment, though, were all too obvious.

As the days and weeks went by, practitioners of the faith felt the effects. Holy wards failed and prayers to Avacyn went unanswered. Avacyn's hosts of angels dwindled and were seen more and more rarely. With no official word from the church, rumors abounded that Avacyn had abandoned the world, leading to a crisis of faith across all four provinces. The evil creatures that were once held back by Avacyn's power, sensing the absence of holy might, became bolder and hungrier. With humanity's safeguard trapped within her own silver vessel, the people of Innistrad were left exposed to the creatures of the night.

Griselbrand

Griselbrand was not the most powerful of all demons, but he has nevertheless played an important role in Innistrad's history. Besides being the cause of Avacyn's imprisonment, he also nurtured the secret cult of the Skirsdag within the ranks of the church, the nobility, and the trades. His devoted servants schemed against the church from within, pursuing their own vision of eternal life in place of Avacyn's hollow promise of a Blessed Sleep.

Griselbrand was also one of four demons across different planes of the Multiverse who forged a pact with the Planeswalker Liliana Vess years ago. Her attempt to free herself from that pact brought her to Innistrad to find the demon, and she opened the Helvault so she could reach her prize.

Dark Ascension

In Innistrad, no one ponders the existence of evil. It has always been there, and no one expects it to change. Vampires, werewolves, zombies, spirits, demons: these are part of the natural order of the world. Humans have always battled the forces of darkness and had their backs to the wall in the fight of good versus evil.

But with Avacyn trapped in the Helvault, the world began to change for the worse. Evil won the upper hand, and Innistrad was overrun by creatures of the night. Without their patron, Avacyn's church weakened dramatically. While the priests and soldiers struggled to hold back the threats, villagers cowered behind walls and prayed for the morning light. Innistrad became a nightmare world of monsters and dark magic, and even some of the angels began to despair.

The people of Innistrad relied on the Church of Avacyn to keep them safe from the bloodthirsty and the undead. With Avacyn's protection, humans held their own against the creatures that sought to destroy them. Faith held real power for the flock. Cathars,

Angel of Flight Alabaster ➤ Howard Lyon





Village Survivors ➤ David Rapoza

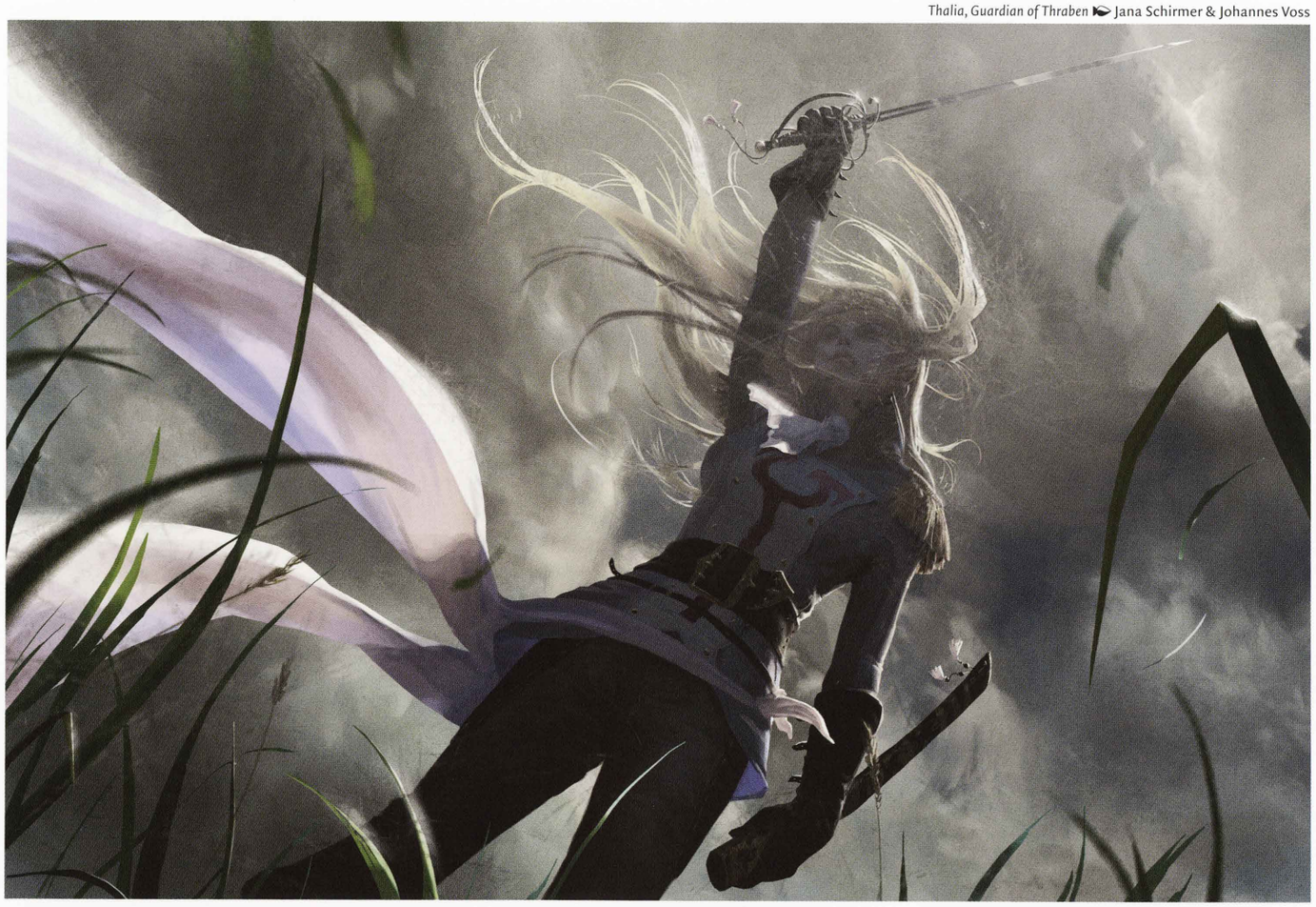
the holy warriors of the church, watched over settlements and graveyards with their swords and holy magic. Even an isolated family deep in the woods of Kessig could enjoy a measure of safety inside a sturdy cottage warded by Avacyn's blessings. But when Avacyn vanished, the power of her wards began to fail. Without her, no one was safe, not even in Thraben, Innistrad's largest city and the seat of the church.

The situation was grim, but not everyone gave up hope of Avacyn's return. The angels did not abandon the humans even though their power to protect them diminished. The holy warriors of the church worked tirelessly to shore up defenses and keep evil at bay. Faithful priests did their best to reassure their flocks that sometimes the darkest hour is just before the dawn.

And in that hour of darkness, a few heroes rose up among the people of Innistrad.

> *"The protective wards of the church have weakened, and no one can tell us why. It's time to look to our own defenses."*
> —Gregel, *militia leader*

Thalia, Guardian of Thraben ➤ Jana Schirmer & Johannes Voss



Thalia, Guardian of Thraben

Thalia was one of Gavony's most promising cathars. As a young inquisitor, soldier, and vampire slayer, she proved her worth soon after graduating from the academy at the Elgaud Grounds. She was an excellent warrior, besting old vampires of several bloodlines and earning a reputation for cunning on the battlefield, all within months of becoming a cathar. But it was her obstinately caring soul that distinguished her and earned her a place among Thraben's elite ranks.

In only her second year of service, she attracted the attention of a man called Lothar, the Guardian of Thraben, a revered soldier who led a force of elite protectors in service of the lunarch, the head of the church. Lothar witnessed Thalia charging into an entire howlpack of Krallenhorde werewolves to rescue a single old man, and was impressed with her selfless valor. The young cathar slashed and fought and risked everything for a single innocent soul, and Lothar made her part of his elite guardians that very day. Soon, she rose to become Lothar's second in command, entrusted to help him defend the High City of Thraben.

As Lothar's trusted right hand, Thalia learned of the Helvault, the great silver obelisk in the Cathedral courtyard. She learned that the Helvault was a protected holy relic of the Avacynian Church, but she was not told its secret: that the missing archangel Avacyn had become imprisoned within it.

"Our world is vast, but Thraben is its heart. The cathedral must stand even if the hinterlands are lost."
—Thalia, Knight-Cathar

Even Lothar himself, Mikaeus's trusted captain of the guard, was ignorant of the truth of Avacyn's disappearance. Mikaeus had decided to keep that grim secret, and he told Lothar only to protect the Helvault with his life. Lothar taught Thalia this duty in turn. She never understood what lay within—she only knew that the Helvault must be protected from the claws of evil at all costs. Thalia took the same oath that Lothar swore: that under pain of death, she would never allow the Helvault to come to harm.

Then came the hordes of undead.

The Siege of Thraben

Emboldened by Avacyn's disappearance and the weakening of the church's wards, two crazed and sinister siblings unleashed their greatest achievement. The necromancer Gisa raised a horde of undead ghouls, and her brother Geralf, an expert skaberen, created a similar army of skaabs—shambling corpses stitched together from disparate body parts. Each hoping to outdo the other in their mad sibling rivalry, Gisa and Geralf besieged the city of Thraben with their zombie armies, sending wave after wave of unhallowed creatures at the holy city. Scores of civilians and cathars fell in Thraben's defense.

Ultimately, Thalia hatched a plan, gathering the straw from thatched roofs around Thraben to create a trap for the undead hordes. She outwitted the ghouls and skaabs, burning them to ash in a great circle of fire before they could penetrate Thraben Cathedral's inner sanctum.

But she wasn't able to save the life of her beloved superior. Tormented by sinister voices during the battle, Lothar plunged off one of Thraben's high walls to his death.

Lunarch Mikaeus would have been the one to promote Thalia, to bestow upon her the title of Guardian of Thraben. But the lunarch, too, was killed in Gisa and Geralf's assault. The death of the lunarch would be grim news to the four provinces, and yet another blow to the perception of the Church's efficacy. So Mikaeus was entombed in secret, whisked away to the clandestine catacombs beneath the cathedral.

And buried with Mikaeus was the secret of Avacyn's imprisonment within the Helvault.

Thalia took charge of the elite guardians of Thraben, becoming the Guardian of Thraben in Lothar's stead. She became the one human being who bore the duty of keeping the Helvault safe—and, unbeknownst to her, of keeping Avacyn sealed within the Helvault. She might have been able to crack the Helvault herself, if she had the knowledge and inclination to do so. She might even have been the one with enough courage to face the demonic creatures it would unleash. But she had made a promise to her old friend Lothar—and to the lunarch. She kept the Helvault, and her promise, intact.

Her protection did not last long.

Gravepurge ➤ Zoltan Boros



Zombie Apocalypse ➤ Peter Mohrbacher



Death Mage on a Mission

Thalia's mission to protect the Helvault put her directly in the path of a powerful Planeswalker, the necromancer Liliana Vess. Long ago, Liliana promised her soul to four powerful demons in exchange for everlasting youth and an extraordinary command over death magic. But although she enjoys the benefits of that dark deal, Liliana isn't one to pay her debts fair and square. Believing that slaying those demons would free her from her soul-debt, she began a mission of destruction across many planes.

The first demon to fall was Kothophed, who made the fatal mistake of sending her on a mission to retrieve an ancient artifact called the Chain Veil. Liliana found the veil, and discovered that it gave her power to challenge her demons, though it exacts a significant cost. Drawing on the power of the veil saps her strength, causing blood to well up in the marks of the demonic contract inscribed in her skin and leaving her even more dependent on its magic. Still, she hopes that killing the other three demons will not only free her from her contract but also allow her to rid herself of the Chain Veil.

"I will be your most demanding master, Liliana. But I have great things in mind for you."
—Kothophed, Soul Hoarder

And so she came to Innistrad in search of Griselbrand, the next demon on her list. By intimidation, persuasion, and outright threat of death, she gathered the clues she needed to find the demon. In the province of Stensia she snuffed out devils while searching for information around the sulfurous Ashmouth. She eventually made her way to a minor demon, though the demon only taunted her and laughed at her attempts at intimidation. But she got what she wanted when the demon bragged of human worship. Liliana had a new lead to pursue.

She made her way from Stensia to the province of Nephalia, where she dug up gossip about demon worshippers in the towns of Havengul and Selhoff. Her inquiries led her to a name and a place: the Skirsdag cult and the city of Thraben.

Griselbrand proved to be frustratingly shy. Liliana made her way to Thraben to learn more about the Skirsdag cult, in hopes that someone would know the demon's whereabouts.



Demonic Tutor ➢ Scott Chou



The Chain Veil ~ Volkan Baga





Liliana, Defiant Necromancer ➪ Karla Ortiz



Skirsdag High Priest ➢ Jason A. Engle

Avacyn Restored

In the courtyard of Thraben Cathedral stood the massive obelisk of silver, the Helvault, where the archangel Avacyn and a host of demonic beings were imprisoned. As the siege of Thraben reached a fever pitch, two determined women with opposing goals were poised to clash. One was the young cathar Thalia, the Guardian of Thraben, who had sworn to keep the holy Helvault from harm. The other was Liliana Vess, the planeswalking necromancer who was dead set on a mission to find a demon lord and destroy him. Their collision shaped the fate of Innistrad.

Liliana's Path

Liliana made her way to Thraben with aching feet and the etched lines of her infernal contract burning her skin. She had scoured Innistrad in search of the demon Griselbrand, chaining together clue after frustrating clue, dealing with all manner of creatures, from annoying demons to the irritating planebound humans of Innistrad. At last she found herself in a place that was decidedly not her element. She stood among priests, holy symbols, and statues of angels—the holy city of Thraben. But one fact made her smile—that the man she was in Thraben to find, Volpaig, was the head of the demon-worshipping cult known as the Skirsdag.

"The demons don't care if we mutter niceties and act out ceremonies. Just kill him."
—Bishop Volpaig, *servant of Griselbrand*

Liliana was not surprised to find that the Skirsdag leader was also a bishop. On all worlds, people seek power in whatever forms they can find it—a principle she understood well. Liliana's confrontation with Volpaig met her expectations. She demanded to know the whereabouts of Griselbrand, but Volpaig refused to divulge them. She threatened painful and immediate bodily harm, but Volpaig vowed to protect his master at all costs, even under threat of death. She prepared a spell to destroy this pathetic demon pawn, but with his last breath, he let something slip. As Volpaig died, he grimly remarked that the only other person who knew where the demon lay was dead: Lunarch Mikaeus, the head of the church, who had died in the siege of Thraben at the hands of rampaging undead hordes.

Finally, things were beginning to go Liliana's way. A bit more intimidation led her to Mikaeus's resting place, the catacombs under Thraben Cathedral. She breathed unnatural life into Mikaeus's rotting body, reviving the former lunarch so she could pry the final secret from his rotting lips. Compelled to serve, the unhallowed Mikaeus told the death mage what she so longed to know: that Griselbrand was locked within the Helvault.

So Liliana resolved to destroy the Helvault.



Mikaeus, the Unhallowed ➢ Chris Rahn





Opening of the Helvault ➽ Todd Lockwood

Clash at the Helvault

Drawing on her considerable necromantic power, Liliana raised a small army of ghouls within Thraben's walls. Coming so soon after Gisa and Geralf besieged the city with their own zombie armies, Liliana and her unholy forces met little resistance as they marched onto the cathedral yard where the Helvault stood, destroying cathars and clerics as they went. She tapped again into the tempting power of the Chain Veil, knowing her dark magic would need to be amplified to get past the forces guarding the cathedral. But the true problem lay ahead, silhouetted against the moon. How could a necromancer muster the magic necessary to shatter a towering, holy monolith of solid moonsilver? She had an idea, but it required convincing the Church of Avacyn to play its part.

As if on cue, Thalia, the Guardian of Thraben, rushed out with her cadre of elite cathars to meet the undead threat. As Liliana's unhallowed forces crashed into the cathedral courtyard, Thalia and her cathars surrounded the Helvault, protecting it with their lives. The ghouls and cathars clashed, swords slicing through the dead and claws rending the living.

This was exactly what Liliana wanted. With a wave of dark magic, she paralyzed the cathars, holding them in a spell of pain. The ghouls continued their horrible assault, gnawing the flesh from the defenders' bones as they stood powerless to resist. Then Liliana gave her ultimatum: a spell that forced a dire choice on the young guardian.

Either the Helvault would be sundered, Liliana told Thalia, or all her cathar compatriots would be devoured. The choice was entirely up to Thalia.

> *"As long as we can utter a prayer or lift a weapon, we have the power to fight back."*
> —Thalia, Knight-Cathar

Thalia could feel the power of the coercive spell upon her. She had vowed that no harm would befall the Helvault on her watch. She knew it was her sole mission, the only duty she was responsible for. But she also knew that Liliana would not stop with just Thalia's cathars. Thalia hesitated, muttering curses at the death mage under her breath, weighing her vow against the lives of the soldiers under her command and all the other people of Innistrad who might stand in Liliana's way.

For their part, her cathars struggled to stay silent, muffling their pain as Liliana's ghouls tore them apart. But finally, it took only the strangled cry from one of her cathars for Thalia to make her choice.

Whatever purpose the Helvault served, she reasoned, it had not saved humanity. The walls of Thraben had twice been besieged by the undead. Vampire families roamed openly in the villages and werewolf howlpacks ravaged the lands between. The Helvault might be a holy relic, but Thalia's promise was worth nothing if it committed her to supporting pain and death. Crestfallen, Thalia pointed to the silver obelisk. Liliana nodded, her spell complete.

For a moment, all sound ceased.

The Prison Sundered

Cracks appeared in the Helvault, rays of light piercing the night from within. Then a blast obliterated the ghouls, knocked the cathars to the ground, and threw Liliana and Thalia back. A helix of golden light streaked skyward from the remains of the Helvault, illuminating the sky with its glow. The moonsilver monolith was sundered, and ribbons of dark Æther flowed away in all directions. A host of demonic entities were free of their prison, and they slunk off into the shadows. All eyes were on the luminous being who appeared before the humans.

It was Avacyn, the Angel of Hope: pure, whole, and eternal.

The Restoration

Within hours, Avacyn's return caused a surge in holy magic across the plane. The archangel's presence revitalized the holy blessings of parish priests and the wards carved into roadside shrines. Flights of angels returned, their despair erased, and set about striking down the monstrous beasts that had plagued the provinces. Archmages whose divine magic had been dampened regained their power, now able to wield powerful spells in Avacyn's name again.

Creatures began to surface that had not been seen on Innistrad before—some that had gone into hiding during the dark times, and some entirely new, forged for divine duty by Avacyn herself. Evil was not utterly wiped out on the plane—far from it, for darkness might be part of Innistrad's very nature. But those who depended on Avacyn's protection had new weapons in the fight.

Thalia's cathar army was renewed, its strength and faith restored. And soon she put it to work, pushing back the vampires and zombie hordes, hoping to reclaim all of the four provinces for humanity.

That only left Liliana and her rendezvous with a certain demon.

"Avacyn emerged from the broken Helvault, but her freedom came at a price—him."
—Thalia, Knight-Cathar



Terminus ➪ James Paick





Favorable Winds ➢ Winona Nelson

Griselbrand Freed

As Griselbrand was released from the Helvault, his first thought was of power.

It was a bittersweet time for Innistrad's demons, and for Griselbrand in particular. Everything this demon lord had worked for had been fulfilled—and in a single moment, it was all undone. The demons Avacyn had trapped in the silver prison had been released. The Skirsdag cult would have plenty of dark beings to worship once more. And Griselbrand himself would be able to resume feeding the mortals' temptation even as he consumed their souls.

But Avacyn, the jailer herself, had returned, restored and unharmed. Griselbrand's trick ultimately had no effect. The angels were returning, and divine power was being restored. His best course of action seemed to be slipping quietly away to the Ashmouth while the mortals were busy celebrating. He planned to bide his time, rebuilding his dominance on Innistrad by luring mortals with promises of power. Perhaps one day he would be ready to plot his revenge. The world, he thought, would behold Griselbrand in all his majesty once more, and on their knees they would weep.

But that thought was cut short.



Griselbrand ➽ Jaime Jones



Defy Death ➪ Karl Kopinski

Griselbrand's Demise

Liliana had not come this far to watch her quarry slink away. Perhaps the demon did not see her in the blast of light, there in the cathedral yard, or perhaps he did not recognize her after so many years. But she recognized *him*—one of the demons who claimed ownership of her soul.

Liliana abandoned Thraben, her work there complete, and stalked Griselbrand to the Ashmouth. The assault at the cathedral had taken a lot out of her, but she knew that time was of the essence. It appeared that angels and holy practitioners were suddenly on this world like a stink, and such people were rarely tolerant of those who practiced her particular form of magic. She had no time to spare.

The exchange, ultimately, was brief. The demon lord was surprised to see her, and he quickly realized how serious this reunion would be. He led with bravado, and she quickly silenced him by destroying a few of his minions. He attempted to bargain with her, offering her even more power, but she saw through his lies and refused, set on releasing her soul from her contract with him. Finally, Griselbrand decided it was time for this upstart to die.

But Liliana let the Chain Veil fuel her spell of death. A vortex of malice erupted from her, seething with a depth of hatred she didn't know she possessed. As satisfying as it was to finally see Griselbrand perish, the feeling unnerved her, and for a fleeting moment she wondered if she would be able to control what her magic was becoming. But in that moment, she destroyed Griselbrand utterly, and the deed was done.

The ground where Griselbrand had stood was empty. The sulfurous air of the Ashmouth was uncharacteristically still. A mob of minor demons and devils moved away, giving Liliana a wide berth, forming a silent circle around the Planeswalker as she prepared to leave.

Meanwhile, across the four provinces, humans gave thanks in quiet joy for the return of Avacyn. As the moon set, villagers unbarred their doors, their blessed-silver spears and angel-fueled magic at the ready once more. Flights of angels answered the calls of the afflicted, striking back against the creatures of the night. Avacyn led the charge, spreading her wings as if to embrace the entire plane.

After the opening of the Helvault, angels hunted down many of the demons that had been freed.

The Madness of Avacyn

The days after Avacyn's return were glorious, but all too brief.

Avacyn, Griselbrand, and the other demons were not the only beings imprisoned in the Helvault, and not the only ones who emerged when Liliana and Thalia sundered the moonsilver prison. The Planeswalker Nahiri, the Lithomancer, had languished within its extradimensional bonds almost since the Helvault first became a prison, a period of about a thousand years.

She spent that time in stasis, cut off from the outside world, only dimly aware of her surroundings—the unutterable darkness of each demon thrust into the prison with her, and the brief, blinding light of Avacyn's presence. She had a millennium to plot her revenge against Sorin, who had once been her beloved teacher and had so cruelly betrayed her.

Using her lithomancy, Nahiri warped the ley lines, the channels of magic that ran through Innistrad, directing their mana toward a sunken ship off the Nephalian coast. With the assistance of the ghoulcaller Gisa and a labor force of zombies, Nahiri started erecting a half-submerged temple to draw the Eldrazi titan Emrakul from the Blind Eternities into Innistrad.

The combination of warped ley lines and the approach of Emrakul sparked the madness of Avacyn and her angels. As incarnate forms of white mana, the angels were part of the magical substance of the plane, and Nahiri's manipulation of Innistrad's mana created a dissonance within their being that twisted their minds past the breaking point. As Emrakul approached, Avacyn perceived the Eldrazi's influence as a contagion that must be expunged from the world. Unable to

Mournful Angel ➢ Magali Villanueve





Goldnight Castigator ➢ Zack Stella

identify the source of the contagion, the crazed angels lashed out at every living thing. Avacyn led the angels in a vain effort to purge this corruption from the plane, viewing the humans they once protected as part of the maddening illness. Even the different flights of angels warred against each other, drastically reducing the number of angels on the plane.

Twisted Flights

As madness seized the angelic hosts, different flights were affected differently.

Wielding fiery swords and clad in full armor, the soldier-angels of Flight Goldnight became the scourge of all mortal life on Innistrad. None could predict what would trigger their violent judgment or where they would strike next.

The angels of Flight Alabaster had always been on the forefront of the church's efforts to root out and punish demon cultists, necromancers, and other heretics. With Emrakul's approach, they grew at least as mad as Avacyn herself. Their fervent obsession drove the forces of the Lunarch Inquisition, the church's efforts to root out sin among the human populace. The angels prodded the church to ever greater and more desperate action.

> "Let the flames ignore the sinless."
> —Avacyn

Avacyn created a new angelic flight, the Flight of Moonsilver, to serve as her honor guard. Armed with moonsilver spears forged from shards of the broken Helvault, these angels served as sentries and guards at Thraben Cathedral and flew alongside Avacyn into battle against any perceived threat to Innistrad.

Only Sigarda and the Host of Herons remained unaffected by madness, perhaps because they were the angels of purity. The remnant of this host retreated to their old haunt in Gavony's remote parish of Videns to maintain a safe distance from Avacyn.

Life on Innistrad





Gavony Township ➪ Peter Mohrbacher



Wooden palisades and watchful
sentries protect larger towns from the horrors of the night.

Fortified Village ➽ Cliff Childs



Life in the Towns and Villages

The tragedy of Innistrad is that all its evils, all the scourges that threaten humanity, actually spring from humanity itself. Humans transform into werewolves or vampires, humans rise as geists or zombies, humans study dark magic and sometimes become demons, and now both human cathars of Avacyn's church and human cultists worshipping at their fields of cryptoliths bring new layers of madness to the plane. The central conflict of Innistrad is humanity fighting its sinister reflections.

In this context, the most precious commodity in Innistrad is safety. Even though a king's ransom couldn't guarantee complete protection from the horrors of the night, the wealthier citizens can afford more safety than the poor. The wealthy titled families live in comfort and relative security behind the stone walls of the cities or their fortified manor houses, and the hierarchs of the church in Thraben enjoy the same protection. Well-to-do artisans and merchants need never leave the larger towns, where wooden palisades and watchful sentries keep the night's terrors at bay. But the lower classes of farmers and laborers risk their lives on a nightly basis with little to protect them but flimsy wooden walls and desperate prayers.

Gavony Province ➢ Jung Park





Mass Appeal ▶ Christopher Moeller

"I've learned to trust my dogs' instincts. When they're calm, I'm calm. And when they get nervous, I get my crossbow." —Hinrik of House Cecani

The Upper Crust

Shielded behind the high walls of Thraben and Havengul, or safely tucked inside fortified manors or keeps in the countryside, the wealthiest of Innistrad's human citizens enjoy a life pleasantly isolated from the very real dangers at their gates. They have the luxury to worry about the "proper" styles of dress, modes of speech, and niceties of behavior, and they look down on anyone who falls short of those standards. And with nothing better to do, they invent scandals and intrigues that seem desperately important to those embroiled in them, but have no impact whatsoever on life beyond their walls.

Most of the upper class resides in Thraben or in manorial estates in the Nearheath of Gavony. The three most important families have both country estates and large houses in town. House Cecani has strong ties to the church (the former Lunarch, Mikaeus, came from this family), and is also known for breeding fine hounds. (The great scandal of the house, however, is its wayward scions Gisa and Geralf, whose study of necromancy resulted in their banishment to the Moorlands.) House Galan is influential in Fal Seminary, taking a scholarly approach to the faith of Avacyn. And House Lieva is known for elegant salons in town, attended by bishops and the very well-to-do, as well as for decadent parties in the country.

The Middle Class

The merchants and artisans that make up the middle class might not have all the protections of the titled nobility, but they still enjoy a level of security that is out of reach for the poor. In Nephalia, these merchants—called the metzalar—are actually more prominent than titled nobility, and enjoy a social status similar to Gavony's nobles. In Thraben and the Nearheath, many merchants make a name for themselves by virtue of their connections to the titled nobility—the tailors of the Alvasch family, for example, are known for making robes for the bishops of Thraben and fine clothing for the Cecani family. The furriers of the Halfid family clothe House Lieva in luxury, and the Dagomar woodworkers crafted much of the interior decoration of the great cathedral.

The church provides an avenue of upward mobility for the middle class. The children of wealthy families are often sent to train as cathars at the Elgaud grounds or as clerics in Fal Seminary. Most of them end up as parish priests or crossways guardians, but the possibility remains that a merchant's son or daughter could rise to a prominent position in Thraben Cathedral, elevating the fortunes of the entire family.

The Common Folk

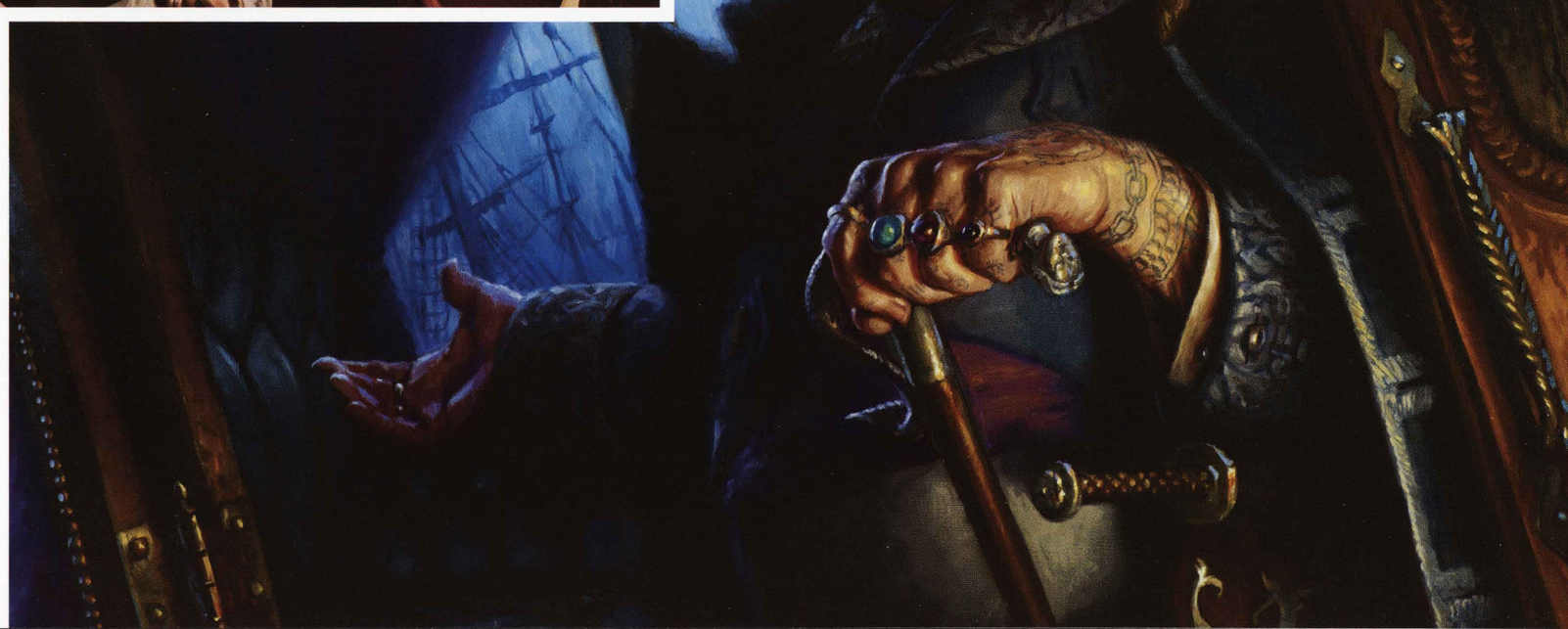
Scattered in villages and isolated farmsteads across the four provinces, the common farmers, shepherds, and laborers of Innistrad rely on the wards of the church, combined with their flimsy walls and locked doors, to protect them. More than that, though, they rely on each other. These folk have a strong sense of community, for they know that they stand together against the horrors of the night—and without each other, they are ultimately alone. This sense of community is fostered by the crossways that link the villages together. Traveling from province to province is never easy, but travel within a province, especially within Gavony, is relatively safe thanks to regular patrols and the large number of crossway chapels, which serve as hostels for overnight travelers.

The common folk have little opportunity for social mobility. Children of poor families are rarely accepted to train as cathars in the Elgaud grounds. Only in the rare case that such a child shows a natural talent for spellcasting is there an opportunity for upward mobility in the church. Unfortunately, the church also contributes to keeping the common folk in poverty, since the tithes they pay in exchange for the church's magical protection are a heavy burden.



Kessig Malcontents ▶ John Stanko

Nephalia Smuggler ▶ Matt Stewart



The Church of Avacyn

Founded by the vampire Planeswalker Sorin Markov in centuries long past, the Avacynian faith is a complex system of beliefs and magical practices intended to protect the humans of Innistrad from the predations of the plane's monsters. Over the centuries, layers of belief and ritual have accreted on to this basic core, beyond what Sorin could have imagined, but as long as Avacyn remained present and sane in the world, the wards of the church remained efficacious, preventing the utter extinction of the human race.

The heart of the Avacynian faith is the archangel Avacyn, who is revered as the source of all protective magic. She is thought to control the seasons and bring an end to the long and bleak season called Hunter's Moon. She is not expected to eliminate evil in the world or to prevent catastrophe; instead, she is the font of protection, the refuge for those who must endure catastrophe. Her church offers protective magic for the living, and provides a restful sleep for the dead.

The people of Stensia revere the Flight of Herons more than the archangel Avacyn herself. The angels of the Flight of Herons are like a pantheon to Stensians, and each family exalts a particular angel in the Flight. If an angel is killed, the families devoted to her wear white for an entire lunar cycle to mourn the loss before choosing a new patron.

Travel Preparations ➤ Vincent Proce



Sometimes, the angels bestow mighty gifts on their servants, empowering them to fight evil in Avacyn's name.

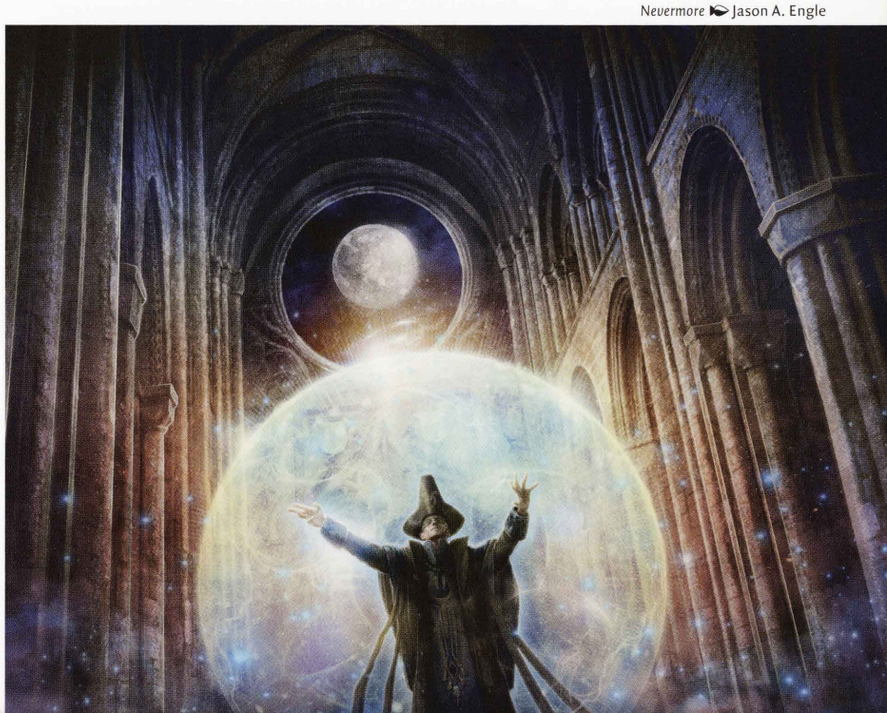
Call to Serve ➢ Jaime Jones

Kessigers are hardheaded and unpretentious people, and the face-to-face realism of the Avacynian faith fits right into their world view. Kessigers believe in "the worked earth below us, the hand-hewn stone walls around us, and the angels above us." However, they don't trust the shiny boots of big-city cathars, the pristine fingernails of Gavony ghost hunters, or the out-of-touch decrees handed down by the aristocrats of the High City of Thraben.

"A church is just wood and walls. A congregation is the faithful praising the angels." —Kolman, *elder of Gatstaf*

The leaders of Avacyn's church are temporal as well as spiritual authorities, with virtually no separation between church and state. Governing elders, soldiers, judges, and even archmages are all part of the church, working alongside the priests and monks whose function is purely religious, and all are ultimately under the authority of the bishops in Thraben Cathedral and their Lunarch Council.

Nevermore ➢ Jason A. Engle





Selfless Cathar ➢ Slawomir Maniak

Church Hierarchy

The head of the church is the Lunarch Council, created to replace the position of Lunarch when its last occupant, Sereni of House Galan, was killed by Avacyn for defying the archangel's orders. Consisting of bishops and cathars of the highest rank, the Lunarch Council is struggling to come to terms with the madness of Avacyn and her angels.

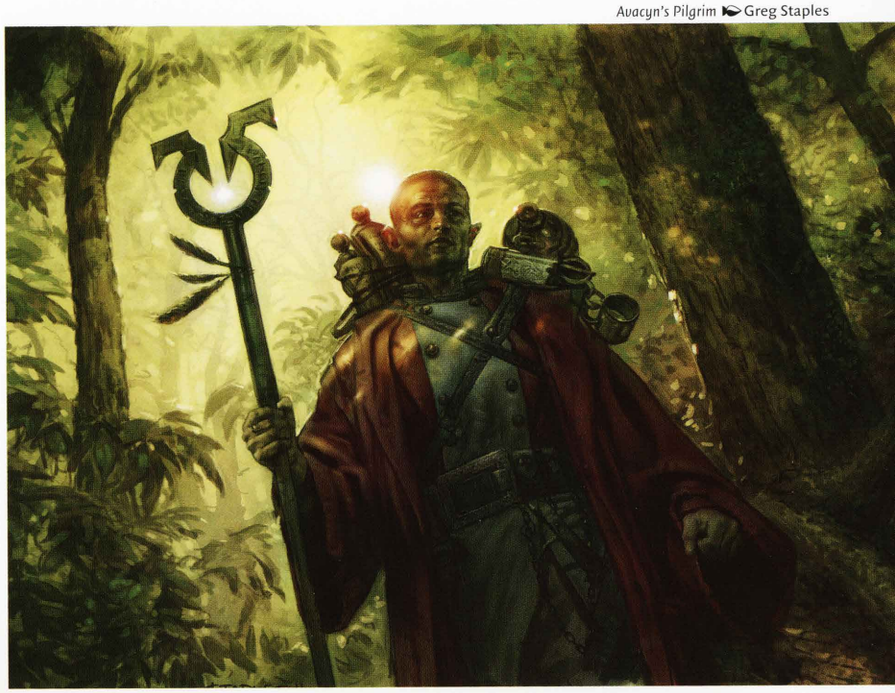
Bishops are the leaders of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church. Each of the four provinces has a bishop, and a handful of other senior priests fill out the council of bishops.

Elders govern the parishes that make up each province, combining the administrative responsibilities of a mayor with the religious authority of a minor bishop. They do not perform the day-to-day sacramental duties of a priest, but ordain priests and preside at major celebrations. A parish is equivalent to a county, encompassing several villages and often one larger town.

Priests attend to the needs of the people at parish churches, village chapels, and crossway altars. They often preside over village councils, and their voices carry authority because of their spiritual power. All priests have the ability to perform magic, though some are more powerful than others. Most of them focus on the protective blessings that make up the rituals of the church.

Monks are wandering priests, not connected to a specific location. Some feel called to minister to those isolated people living beyond the reach of a parish priest, but others take up the life of a monk because they disagree with their superiors in the hierarchy. Some are wild-eyed fanatics or heretical teachers, but many are quiet, peaceful souls with firm convictions that set them apart from the church. Some commit the heresy of burning the dead, which is thought to create angry, restless spirits; others pursue communion with the restless dead.

Avacyn's Pilgrim ➤ Greg Staples



Cathedral Sanctifier ➤ Michael C. Hayes





Silverblade Paladin ➤ Jason Chan

Cathars

Cathars are the soldiers of the Avacynian church, but "soldiers" is a broad term that encompasses everything from crime-solving investigators to mounted paladins. Some cathar orders are so independent as to be virtually separate sects of the church, while others are tightly knit to the cathedral hierarchy.

Gavony Riders. The elite cavalry of Innistrad, the Gavony Riders are extensively trained in mounted combat with swords and lances. They are stationed in Rider's Lock, a walled compound in Gavony's Moorlands, near the village of Estwald. The compound includes a large manor where Captain Einolf Brandt lives with his family. Brandt is a loyal, competent leader with a strong sense of responsibility to the villagers who live nearby.



Cathars' Crusade ➢Karl Kopinski

> "As long as we can utter a prayer or lift a weapon, we have the power to fight back."
> —Thalia, Knight-Cathar



Loyal Cathar ➢Ryan Pancoast

Mausoleum Guards. The Mausoleum Guards are not limited to protecting tombs and graves, though that important work is part of their mandate. They are the rank-and-file soldiers of the cathars, wielding little magic but making up for it in numbers. They guard walls and key locations in Thraben, such as the cathedral, courts, and trade houses.

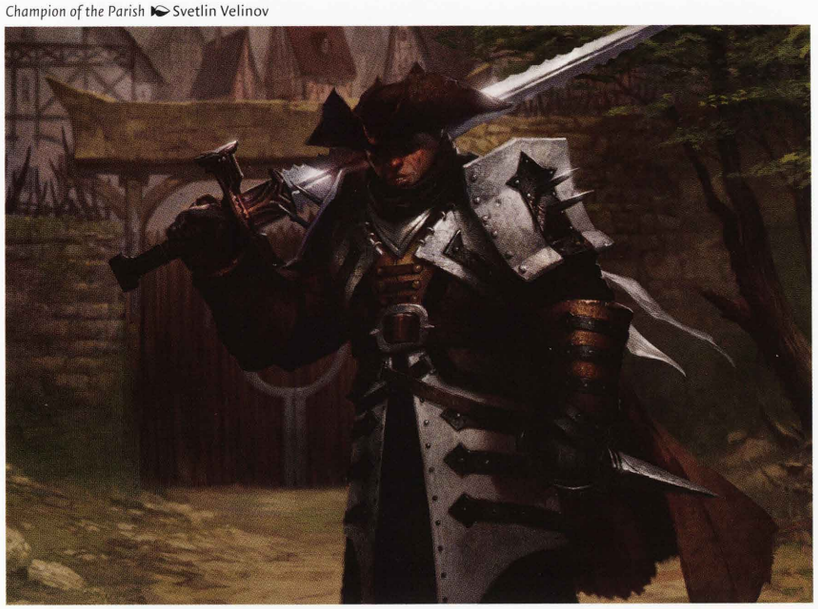
Midnight Duelists. Based in the port towns of Nephalia, the Midnight Duelists have only the most tenuous connection to the church hierarchy in Thraben. They patrol the streets, particularly at night, on the lookout for thieves, vampires, and corpse traders. They are experts in bladework, and when a vampire challenges a citizen to a duel under Nephalia's formal dueling etiquette, a Midnight Duelist often steps in as a proxy for the challenged citizen.

Moor Chaplains. The Moor Chaplains are battlefield chaplains who wield magic and weapons with equal skill. Their magic focuses on healing and protection, so they don't usually fight on the front lines. Their primary role is to heal the injured enough for them to continue the fight, and sometimes a group of chaplains will combine their efforts to cast large wards over an entire military unit or besieged village. The chaplains are headquartered in the outskirts of Thraben, under the command of Captain Nadila Maas. She faced much discontent among the ranks as the cathar's power faltered during Avacyn's absence, but her cathars have come to trust and rely on her since the archangel's return.

Parish-Blades. Cathars of the Parish-Blades serve as escorts along the crossways and protect the cathedral in Thraben. They are an elite military force that assembles at the bishops' command. The Parish-Blades who patrol the passes and crossways of Stensia—particularly Hofsaddel and the Kruin Pass—are casually called Roadwatchers.

Quiver of Kessig. The Quiver of Kessig is a recent offshoot of the Parish-Blades, based in the Gatstaf Grotto and almost entirely independent of the Thraben hierarchy. They specialize in archery and long-range defense, and they often guard town walls and church roofs against flying attackers, whether spirits, vampires, specters, or demons. They are closely allied with Sigarda and the Host of Herons, and serve as scouts and rangers for the angels. Captain Raf Gyel is the founder and captain of the Quiver of Kessig.

Champion of the Parish ➢ Svetlin Velinov



Cathar's Armor ➢ Ben Maier





"May angels carry him into the Blessed Sleep with dreams of sunlit days and moonless nights."
—Tomb inscription of Saint Raban

Inquisitors

Historically, inquisitors were cathar detectives who investigated crimes both mundane and supernatural. They traveled to remote parishes plagued by unexplained murders and uncovered werewolves attempting to live among normal humans. During Avacyn's absence, they led a series of more brutal inquisitions in Kessig and the Gavony Moorlands. They executed people on suspicion of lycanthropy without any proof, and punished accused heretics in unsanctioned trials without angelic witnesses. With Avacyn's madness, this brutal form of inquisition has become the norm, and the inquisitors who still pry into dark mysteries have become the minority.

Knight-Inquisitors of Saint Raban. Taking their name from the legendary investigator and slayer of werewolves, this order of cathars serves as inquisitors in the classic sense—not slaughtering the populace, but investigating mysteries and secrets. They are detectives, investigators, and delvers into secrets best left unknown. Because they explore mysteries related to the spreading madness, they are the most likely cathars to go insane as they glimpse some terrible truth behind those mysteries.

Moorland Inquisitor ➢ David Palumbo

Avacynian Archmages

The Avacynian archmages are gifted wizards with the inborn ability to channel some of the divine power of the archangels. Each lineage of the archmages practices unique techniques passed down from master to student for generations, ultimately tracing back to the three archangels and Avacyn herself.

Spearsages, the Archmages of Goldnight. Associated with the power of the sun, the archmages of Goldnight use powerful and aggressive spells. They blast hordes of undead into ash with blinding rays of holy light and bolster their allies' speed and courage with powerful prayers. They supplement their magical training with weapons practice, and often wear armor under their robes. Their symbol, emblazoned on their weapons and armor, is Avacyn's twin-bladed spear superimposed on the fiery disk of the sun.

Moonsages, the Archmages of Alabaster. The archmages of Alabaster are concerned with preserving the Blessed Rest, preventing humans from returning as zombies. They use preventative and warding spells, banishing the undead to the void and making sure graves remain sealed. Dipping into the realms of alchemy, the Moonsages study the works of notable skaberen and ghoulcallers to better understand the forces that can animate the dead. They also use alchemy to purify moonsilver wherever they can find it, creating amulets, wards, and weapons for the cathars and clergy. Their symbol is Avacyn's collar rising above the moon.

Springsages, the Archmages of Herons. The archmages of Herons are healers, using their magic to heal individual people, whole villages, and even the land. They act much like wandering priests or monks, traveling the remote reaches to minister to the people and heal the sick. They sometimes gather in secluded cloisters, tending their gardens and appreciating the beauty of nature. They typically wield wooden staffs and clubs and wear hardened leather, if they wear any armor at all. Their symbol is a heron within a circle, often tattooed on their skin.

"The cathars have their swords, the inquisitors their axes. I prefer the 'diplomatic' approach."
—Terhold, archmage of Drunau

Dual Casting ➤ Johannes Voss



Demolish ➪ Raymond Swanland

Church Artisans

A few specialized orders of clerical artisans are associated with the Avacynian church. They are similar to cathar orders and are sometimes lumped together with cathars, but they are more sedentary and less trained in martial practices. These orders include smiths who craft blessed weapons from silver and runechanters who inscribe protective wards onto physical objects.

The Devisers are trained in architecture and engineering, specializing in protective magic that can be infused into walls, churches, and settlements. Some also design siege weapons and other magical artifacts.

The Lunar Smiths forge blessed weapons for the church, reciting blessings over the weapons at various stages of the forging process. The process is painstaking but highly effective. The most renowned smiths work in silver, which is particularly effective against lycanthropes.



Lunar Mystic ➪ Wesley Burt

The Runechanters are a specialized branch of the clergy that specializes in engraving blessings on material objects. Swords, axes, spears, and even children's toys can be inscribed with blessings to protect the owner. The best Runechanters inscribe writing so small that hundreds of blessings can fit on even a small object.



Dauntless Cathar ➤ Zack Stella





Avacynian Missionaries ➽ Wayne Reynolds

The Lunarch Inquisition

As Avacyn and her angels began to purge the countryside, her confused and terrified followers scrambled to react to this transformation. Bishops and cathars of the church were desperate to find out what had happened to their beloved angel. The few who openly defied her power—including Mikaeus's successor as lunarch—were struck down.

To address this situation, a new Lunarch Council was established, made up of senior bishops of the church with a few cathar leaders in advisory positions. The council was supposed to be a temporary arrangement until a new lunarch could be established. All too quickly, though, the Lunarch Council appeared to have gone as mad as Avacyn herself.

Before long, the council was convinced that the sin of the people drove the angels mad, and the church launched a bloody inquisition against its own people to assist the angels in purging sin from the world. The council itself spent much of its time issuing decrees to ban certain behavior in a vain effort to stem the angels' madness, and supervising the efforts of the inquisitors to punish those who violated the bans.

Cathar inquisitors, once helpful investigators who rooted out werewolves and slew vampires in Avacyn's name, now led processions of wheeled guillotines from village to village, carrying out what they claimed to be Avacyn's will by executing the "sinplagued." Processions of rolling guillotines and heron-masked inquisitors traveled across Gavony, beheading those perceived as sinplagued. Sometimes violent mobs of fearful people did the inquisitors' work for them.

Ormendahl the Reaper and the Skirsdag

Among the more powerful demons released from the Helvault with Avacyn, Ormendahl survived the archangel's purge by hiding in caverns deep beneath the cathedral. He took Griselbrand's place as the leader of the Skirsdag, a cult of demon worshipers within the innermost sanctum of the church of Avacyn.

Unfortunately for the innocent victims of the Lunarch Inquisition, the fractious council of bishops was highly susceptible to sinister influence. Bishop Jerren, who sat on the Lunarch Council, was the Reaper's high priest, and he used the uncertainty of the council to whip the church into an ever more violent frenzy.

"Her righteous fury tolls pure throughout the land! Let the wretched sinplagued tremble and hearken to its death knell!" —Inquisitor Seeta of Thraben

Ormendahl, Profane Prince ☛ Min Yum



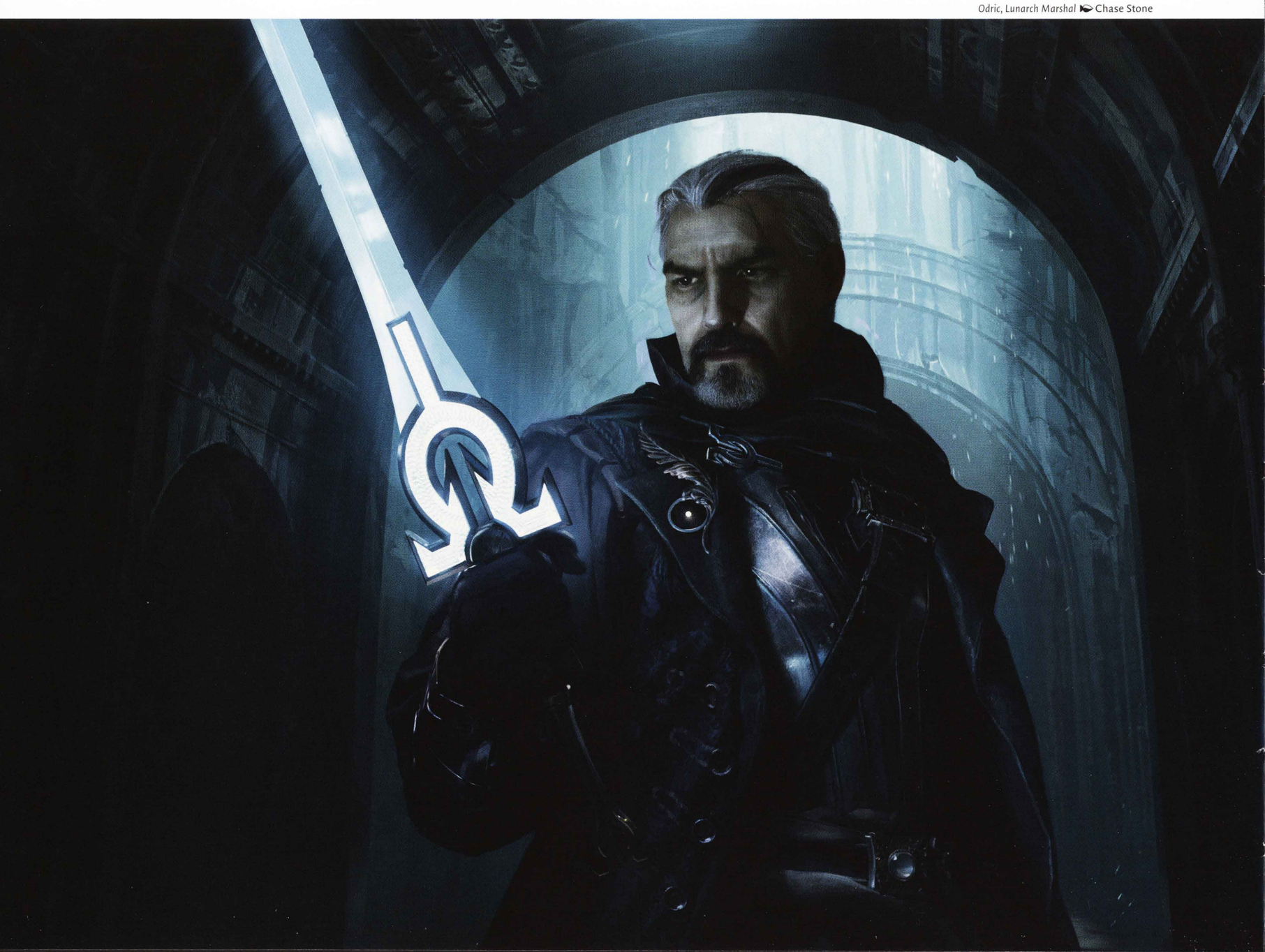
Odric and Thalia

A great leader in the defense of Thraben, a cathar named Odric showed tremendous initiative in organizing the Lunarch Council to deal with Avacyn's madness. He earned a seat on the council as a representative of the cathars, but without an actual vote on council matters, and his calls for reason were increasingly drowned out in the frenzy of the council's members to purge the "sinplagued" from the land. He supported the council, but only because he felt that his duty demanded it.

Thalia, the Guardian of Thraben, was a devoted knight-cathar who was instrumental in both the defense of Thraben and the opening of the Helvault. Even in the face of Avacyn's madness, Thalia remained a faithful champion of everything the Church of Avacyn stood for. Her conscience, however, no longer allowed her to support the church itself. She tried to avoid the notice of the Lunarch Council and its inquisitors while investigating the sinister influence that was driving the murderous rampages of priests and angels alike. At the same time, she tried to find allies within the church who could help her stand against those evil forces, forming the nascent Order of Saint Traft.

"I have given my life to the church, my soul to Avacyn, my heart to the people."
—Odric

Odric, Lunarch Marshal ➽ Chase Stone





Lunarch Inquisitors ➤ Wayne Reynolds



Inquisitors' Guillotine ➤ James Paick

Unsuccessful in persuading Odric to stand against the council, she nevertheless found a sympathetic ear in his disciple, Grete. Eventually, Thalia discovered evidence that the Lunarch Council was infected with corruption and madness. She boldly confronted the council, presenting the evidence she had uncovered, but more members of the council were corrupt than she had believed, and she was captured and slated for execution. In the end, Odric made the heart-wrenching choice to turn against everything he ever believed in and fight to save a person he knew to be innocent.

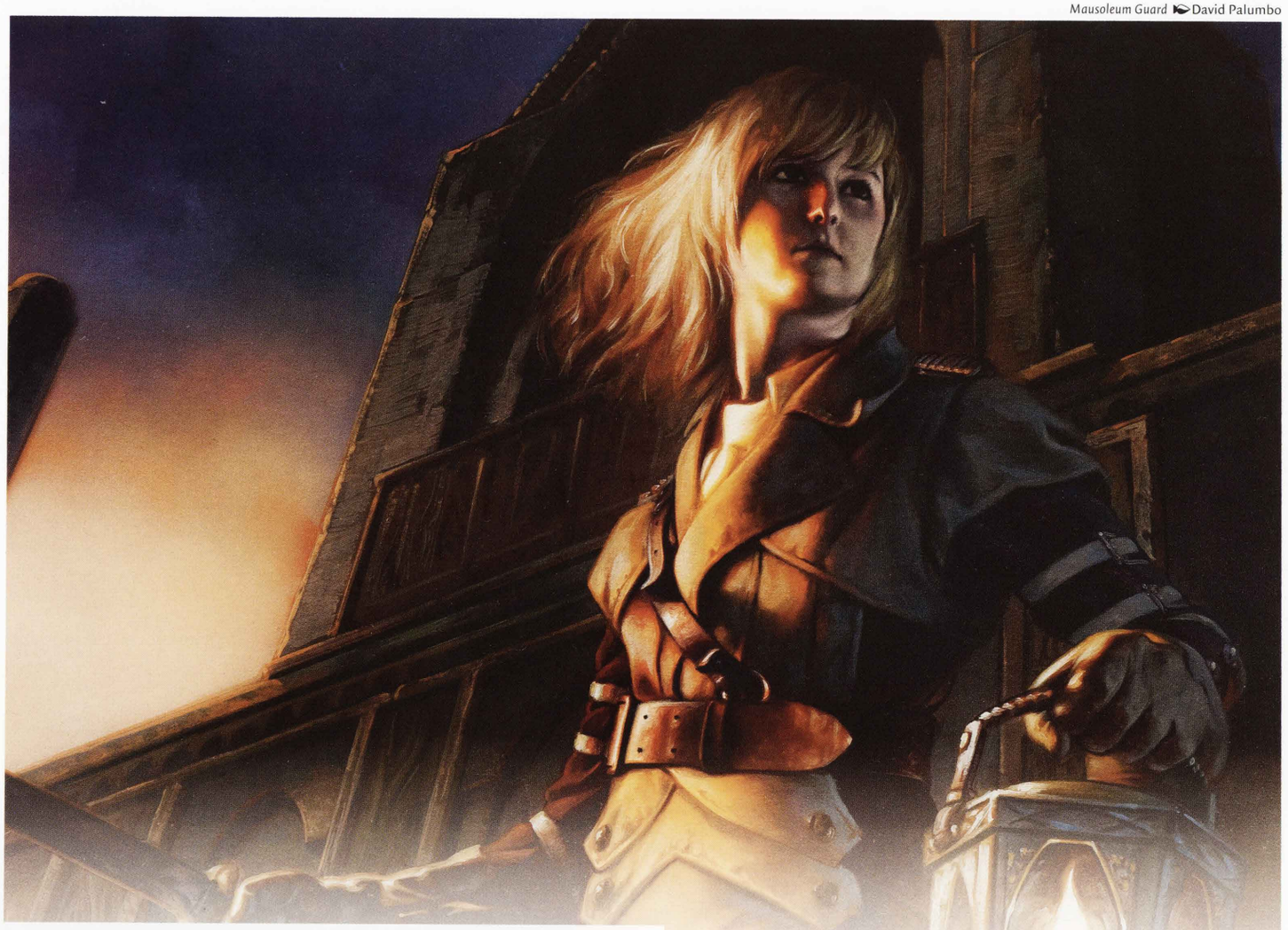
Elgaud and the Flight of Goldnight

Long ago, a contingent of Avacyn's church established a small fort outside Havengul in the province of Nephalia, called the Elgaud Grounds. Elgaud became a center for the training of new cathars, where they learned to spread the word of Avacyn and protect the people. It was also the home of the Flight of Goldnight, the host of soldier-angels led by Gisela.

With the madness of the angels, the Elgaud Grounds became the bloody hub of trial and execution for the Lunarch Inquisition. The open grounds where young cathars once practiced martial skills were now ringed with guillotines, and the lower levels of the Engelturm were stocked with prison cells and devices of torture.

The cathars and clerics of the Elgaud Grounds became agents of the angels, carrying out their will to purge the land of sin and heresy. Manfried Ulmach, once the Elgaud master-at-arms responsible for maintaining order within the grounds, was appointed Chief Inquisitor of Elgaud. A stern and unyielding man, he regularly led squads of cathars and recruits out into the surrounding countryside, the canyons of the Erdwal, and the mires of Morkrut to hunt monsters and the sinplagued. Bishop Cawle was the cleric in charge of the local inquisitors, but he served the angels and the Lunarch Inquisition reluctantly, obeying out of fear rather than devotion to the cause.

Mausoleum Guard ☛David Palumbo





Slayers' Stronghold ☛Karl Kopinski

Cathar Apostates

The profound obsession of the Goldnight angels had the unintended consequence of driving some cathars and other servants of the church away from the Lunarch Inquisition. In Gavony and Kessig, such cathars could carry out their duties with little fear of reprisal, but in Nephalia they were branded as apostates and hunted as if they were necromancers or werewolves. Even so, they continued their efforts of hunting the evils of Nephalia, too busy protecting the people to confront the angels and inquisitors head on. Among the most famous cathar apostates was Minna of Selhoff, a former Midnight Duelist who patrolled the town streets at night. An expert in bladework, during the time of Avacyn's absence she strayed from her work and staged traveling shows to exhibit her skills. With the angels' madness, though, she rededicated herself to her former mission and—thanks to her established reputation—became something of a popular hero to the people of Nephalia who were terrorized by the Lunarch Inquisition.



Elgaud Inquisitor ➤ Slawomir Maniak

"You must shatter the fetters of the past. Only then can you truly act."
—Rem Karolus, *Blade of the Inquisitors*

Rem Karolus, Slayer of Angels

Once the most feared and revered of the church's inquisitors, Rem Karolus made a name for himself by wandering Innistrad on his dappled gray horse, dealing with crises as he encountered them. Traveling with his trademark rapier and poniard at his side, and a bastard sword slung on his back, he confronted and killed more werewolves and vampires than any other human alive. With the madness of Avacyn and the church's new inquisition targeting the humans he once protected, Rem Karolus disavowed any connection to the church and dedicated himself to the grim work of slaying angels.

The Order of Saint Traft

In rebellion against the harsh inquisition of the Lunarch Council, Thalia founded the Order of Saint Traft. Named after an ancient saint who fought demons alongside the host of Avacyn, the order aspires to the ideals of bravery and zeal that the living saint—and his angelic allies—upheld. Traft was betrayed by a demon and slain, and his spirit never entered the Blessed Sleep, so the members of Thalia's order implore the ancient geist for insight and assistance.



Bitterheart Witch ✒Karl Kopinski

Cults and Witches

With the madness of the angels, a variety of new cults sprang up across Innistrad. Some were direct continuations of the demon cults that proliferated during Avacyn's absence, but others were entirely new—centered on madness and revering new monsters that had arisen while seeking to provoke or prolong the angels' madness. Many can be traced directly to the activity of Nahiri.

Cults of Madness

Many of the cults that once followed demons lost their patrons when Avacyn emerged from the Helvault. The people who belonged to those cults were not so quickly restored to church and community, and many of them remain disgruntled, rebellious, or mad. Nahiri has played on their discontent and given them new masters to serve. Some revere her, especially in Stensia, believing that she is an ancient vampire. Others offer sacrifice to the monsters of the world—particularly (in Nephalia) the monstrous kraken-like Kralmar.

Many of these cults gather around spires of twisted stone (called cryptoliths) that Nahiri has raised from the ground across the provinces. The true purpose of the stones—redirecting the ley lines of mana flowing through the plane—is lost on the cultists, but the redirection of mana has caused the madness of the angels, who are formed of raw mana. Whether this was Nahiri's intent or simply a side effect of some greater plan is a mystery. Many cultists view the angels' madness as a sign of the dawning of a new age, believing that the angels are purging those who are unworthy to be present when some unknown apocalypse occurs.

These cultists are physically as well as mentally warped. Their features twist into bestial or fishlike forms, as if they are regressing through millions of years of evolution. Some even grow tentacles or tails, transforming into slimy horrors resembling octopuses or amphibians.

Demon Cults and Witches

Not all the demons were killed when Avacyn escaped the Helvault, and some of their cults remain intact. The most important of these is the Skirsdag, which hides within the very hierarchy of the church in Thraben. Once dedicated to the archdemon Griselbrand, the Skirsdag is now led by Ormendahl the Reaper, a demon who survived the angelic purge by hiding in caverns deep beneath the cathedral. With the madness of Avacyn, the Skirsdag gains increasing influence over the Lunarch Council, adding violent zeal to the church's inquisition.

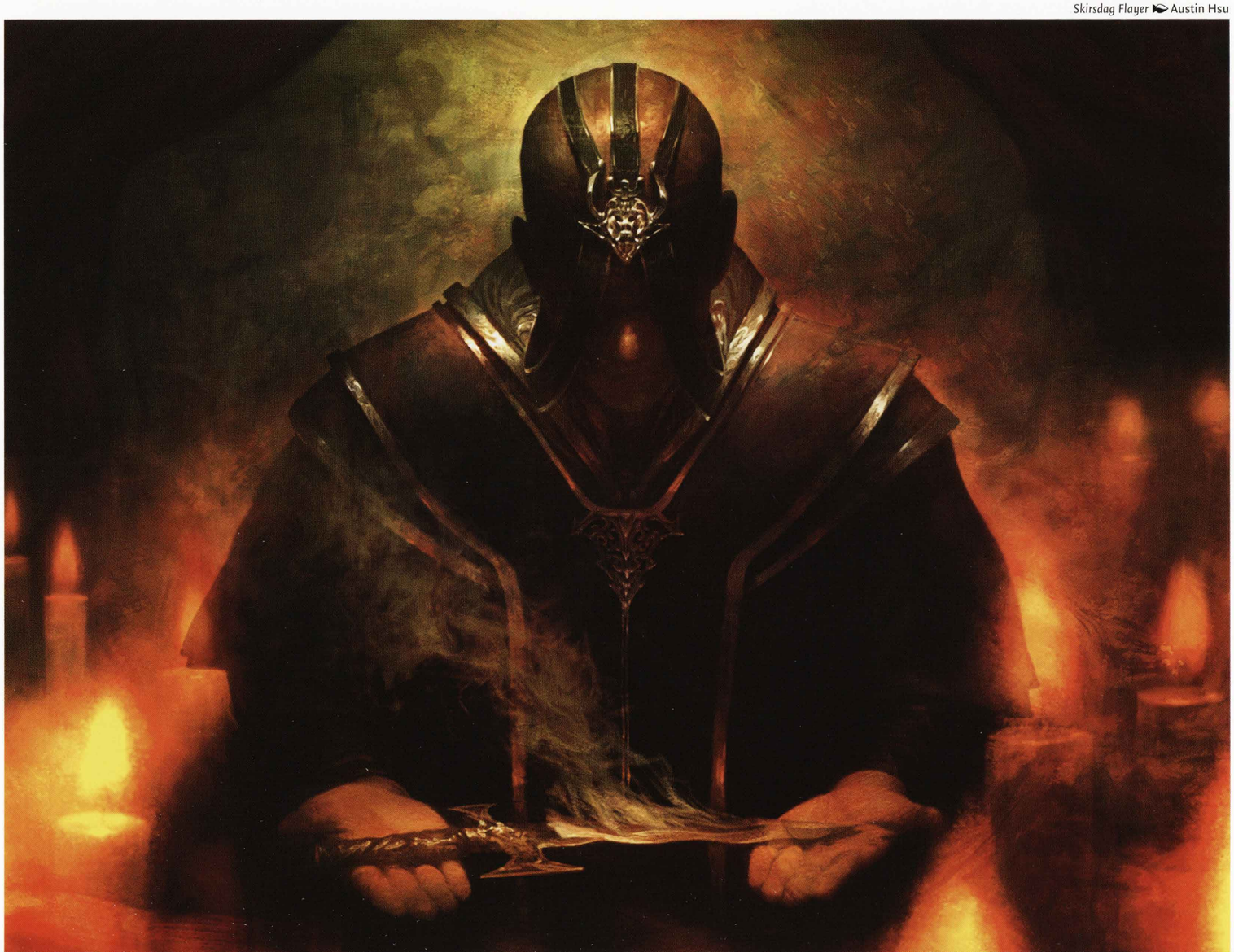
The distinction between a demon cult and a witch's coven is subtle: cults worship demons, but witches derive actual magical power from them, forging contracts similar to those that gave Liliana Vess her magical power.

Forcemages

Although they are often called witches and hunted along with those who pact with demons, forcemages stand on the side of humanity against the horrors of Innistrad. Their power is derived from friendly pacts made with nature spirits, combined with extensive knowledge of herbalism. They gather in secretive lodges in the deepest parts of the Ulvenwald and the Somberwald, though solitary forcemages are also found in wooded areas throughout the provinces.

"The appearance of these warped stones throughout the provinces is too pervasive to be random. They serve a purpose, though what that may be, I have not yet gleaned. More evidence is needed."
—Tamiyo's Journal

Skirsdag Flayer ➢ Austin Hsu



Necro-Alchemists

Some bizarre and eccentric scientists use geists—the spirits of the dead—as an energy source to conduct strange experiments on living creatures and fuel crazed technological inventions. They are sometimes called geistmages, and sometimes they dabble in the construction of skaab zombies, so the terminology is not clear and different practitioners might identify themselves in different ways. What they all have in common, however, is their use of elaborate contraptions to capture, bind, and draw energy from geists.

Often this technology is employed to power sprawling laboratories, but some necro-alchemists have managed to bind geists to smaller containers, such as a tubelike canister strapped to the back and attached to a lightning-hurling weapon. At their best, necro-alchemists use their technological advances to fight the crazed angels. But even in such a case, a geistmage might capture the spirit of a fallen ally to recharge a geist-lightning weapon that has run out of fuel.

"Let those idiot priests tremble! A new era in unlife begins here and now. Oglor, raise the lightning vane!" —Stitcher Geralf

Skaberen

Skaberen, also called stitchers, are scientist-mages who create artificial forms of life. The true goal of a skaberen is to create life, an undertaking which usually produces a malformed "offspring" for the practitioner. This offspring is a skaab—a constructed zombie.

Skaabs are assembled from disparate body parts and animated through scientific means to create the semblance of life. Most skaabs are more or less humanlike, but creative stitchers have crafted winged skaabs similar to the drakes of other worlds, towering giant skaabs, and unrecognizable horrors.

Skaberen go through an elaborate process to gather the parts, bind them together, infuse the stitched body with vital fluid, and plant a vital force in the unliving flesh. Some skaberen use necro-alchemy to fuel their laboratories, leading to some confusion in terminology.

Skaberen usually ply their trade in remote and inhospitable places, since they are viewed as blasphemers by the church of Avacyn. Skaberen often become obsessed hermits who surround themselves with ancient scrolls and books, phials of rare noxious liquids, glass jars full of pickled organs, anatomical charts for both humans and beasts, rune-engraved skeletal remains, and small anvils and hammers for inscribing runes on brass and copper plates.

Laboratory Maniac ➢ Jason Felix





Four Steps to Producing a Skaab

1. Corpus Creare, also known as "corpse cobbling," is the collecting of various anatomical parts from corpses to construct the skaab's body. This is usually performed by paid grave robbers or homunculi under a skaberen's charge. In some cases, even the limbs of beasts are used for the construct; if a human arm is not available, a horse's leg can suffice.
2. Patina Ligita, or runebinds, are the "binding plates" used to join various anatomical features together. These are plates of copper and/or brass inlaid with silver runes. They provide an arcane bridge of sorts between disparate parts gathered by corpse-cobbling.
3. Viscus Vitae, or "vital fluid," is the key to the skaberen's art. Viscus vitae is created by mixing a large quantity of lamp oil with the slightest pinch of an angel's dried blood. Once a perfect mixture of viscus vitae is created, any blood remaining in the corpse is replaced with it via transfusion. As a result of this process, skaabs are highly flammable.
4. Vox Quietus, translated as "the silent word," is the final step in creating a skaab. The skaberen whispers a fairly lengthy incantation over the corpse, which awakens the creature, but in a much calmer manner than that which is used by ghoulcallers. Once awakened, the skaab is in a calm, suggestible state, which allows the alchemist to begin the long task of reeducating the creature. In the eyes of a skaberen, the technique used by ghoulcallers is both crude and heretical, and provides unacceptable results.

Ghoulcallers

Ghoulcallers are necromancers, mages who use black mana to call forth the dead from graveyards. These risen dead are called ghouls, or the unhallowed. The ghoulcaller fills the fragile mind of his or her creation with a single driving purpose, which the ghoul carries out to the best of its ability using whatever skills it has left. The result is a grotesque parody of life: risen blacksmiths attempting to "reforge" their opponents, fallen warriors rasping incoherent battle cries, undead murderers reawakening their deadly slyness, and fallen mages trying to weave spells that often result in some horrible distortion of their original purpose.

The clergy of Avacyn perform rituals on the final resting places of the dead to ensure the Blessed Sleep, but during Avacyn's absence ghoulcallers had an easier time in their work. In this time of Avacyn's madness, not only are necromancers more easily able to plunder the graves of the fallen, but ghouls also seem to arise spontaneously from grafs across Innistrad.

Ghouls also include zombie animals, often animated by necromancers to serve as familiars. Cats, rats, and snakes are the most common of these ghoul familiars.

Liches

Liches are powerful necromancers who fuse the magic of the ghoulcaller with the arcane science of necro-alchemy to preserve themselves in hideous unlife while retaining their sentience and magical power. One lich is known to reside in the Nephalian town of Havengul, but if others exist they are more skilled at hiding their presence.

"The living are born small and weak. The dead rise ready to serve. The choice is obvious."
—Gisa, *ghoulcaller of Gavony*

Unbreathing Horde ➽ Dave Kendall





Grafs

A graf is a field of the dead—a graveyard, battlefield, shipwreck, or any other place where the dead lie as potential fodder for ghoulcallers. Grafs are categorized as follows:

FENGRAF: A flooded lowland graveyard, no longer hallowed, where the poor were buried. Ghouls rising from a fengraf might carry the tools of their trade.

SEAGRAF: A shipwreck, where the bodies of sailors or fishers lie unhallowed. Seagraf ghouls might carry nets, harpoons, or similar gear.

NOOSEGRAF: A site where murderers, traitors, and thieves are buried. Noosegraf ghouls are often more bloodthirsty, clever, and stealthy than other ghouls.

DIREGRAF: A gruesome battlefield. Diregraf ghouls are armed and armored, and might fall into military formations in a distant memory of their past lives.

PEERGRAF: A graveyard for the noble classes.

WITCHGRAF: A graveyard where mages are laid to rest. Witchgraf ghouls often retain more than a shred of their former minds and manage to cast some of the spells they knew in life.

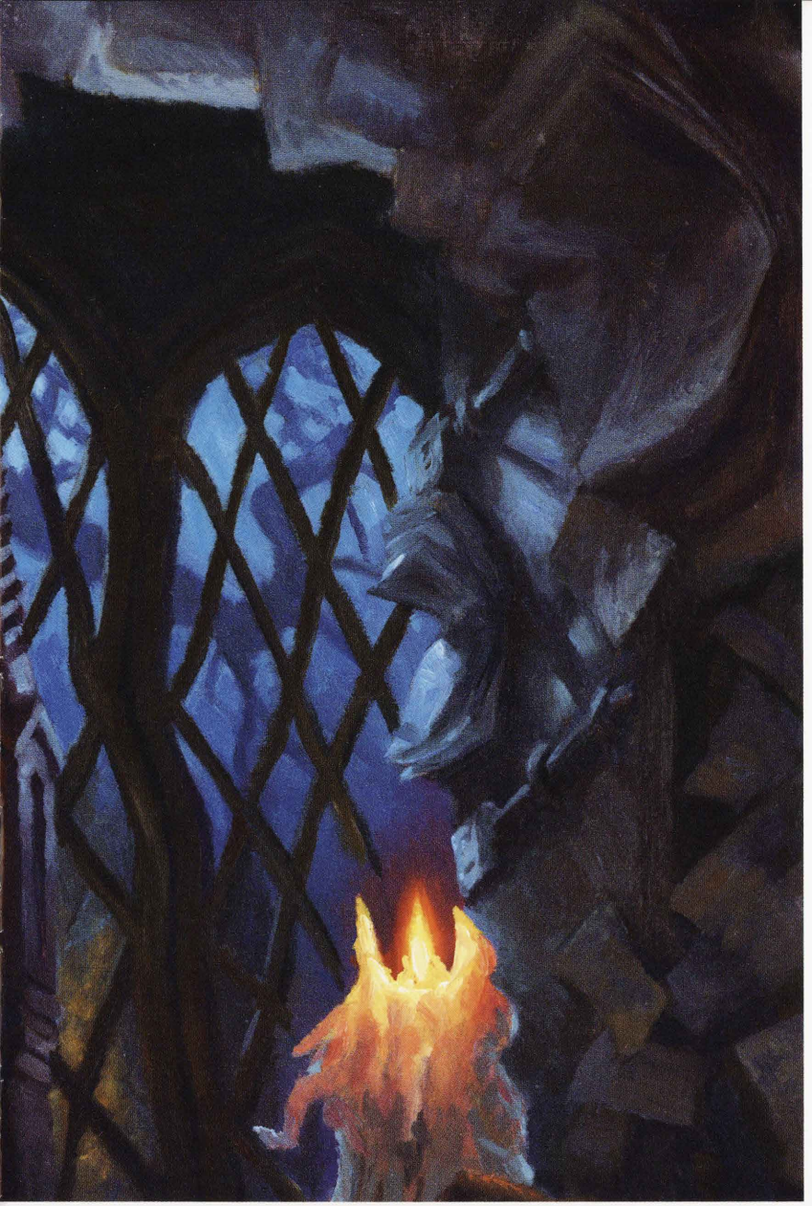
MOLDGRAF: A woodland site where corpses are left to rot, usually the discarded bodies of criminals—or those left behind by criminals.

BLESSED GRAF: A well-ordered, carefully tended graveyard-park in Thraben, guarded by cathar soldiers.

Walking Corpse ➪ Igor Kieryluk



Manic Scribe ➽ Matt Stewart



Delvers into Madness

Vampires, werewolves, geists, and zombies were all once human, and have become humanity's worst affliction on the plane of Innistrad. Like any other world, however, Innistrad has its share of fully human monsters, ranging from crazed killers to obsessed scholars delving into secrets that humanity was never intended to comprehend, encountering forbidden eldritch lore that their minds cannot contain.

Under the guise of science, many scholars use alchemy, geist-powered necro-alchemy, or twisted arcane magic to warp and break the laws of nature in horrible ways. For example, a nameless scholar of Nephalia managed to isolate his basest desires, unshackled by reason or conscience, into an entirely distinct personality, allowing him to live in society as a noble and upright gentleman while his alter ego rampaged and slaughtered at night. Another scholar perfected a potion that turned him completely invisible, allowing him to sneak past the vampires of his native Stensia, but slowly driving him mad until he used his invisibility to prey on other humans just as the vampires did. Yet another scholar, at the conclusion of a series of experiments involving combining the attributes of various animals, eventually transformed himself into a hybrid of human and insect.

"Unfortunately, all my test animals have died or escaped, so I shall be the final subject. I feel no fear. This is a momentous night."
—Laboratory notes, final entry



Aberrant Researcher ◆ Nils Hamm

Some citizens of Innistrad have endured the plane's horrors by becoming the worst monsters of all. Some turn to cannibalism. Others retreat into the woods or secluded manor houses, where they kill any who trespass upon their self-appointed domains. And some lose themselves in apocalyptic ravings about the imminent end of the world—which are sometimes not too far from the truth.

With the madness of the angels and other strange happenings across Innistrad, this tendency toward dangerous insanity has risen to a fever pitch. Well-meaning scholars and cathar inquisitors who begin to pry into the reasons behind recent events grow obsessed with their search, unable to stop even as the knowledge they gain begins to twist their minds. Ordinary townsfolk can be equally stricken, often growing violent. Perhaps these people also happened upon forbidden lore, or maybe they practiced secret rituals at twisted stones that shattered their minds. But some seem to be innocent bystanders, unable to cope with the terrors of a world where the protectors of humanity have become destroyers.

Creatures of the Night





Moonrise Intruder ➤ Daarken

Werewolves

Driven by their passions, their supernatural hunger, and the cycle of the moon, werewolves shed their tenuous humanity and embrace the savage predator within them. They live in the boundary between humanity and supernatural evil, between civilization and the wilds, between the light and the utter darkness. They embody the urge to violence, the rebellion against social mores and chains of conscience, and the hunting instinct within the human heart, gathering in wild packs or hunting alone under the silver moon.

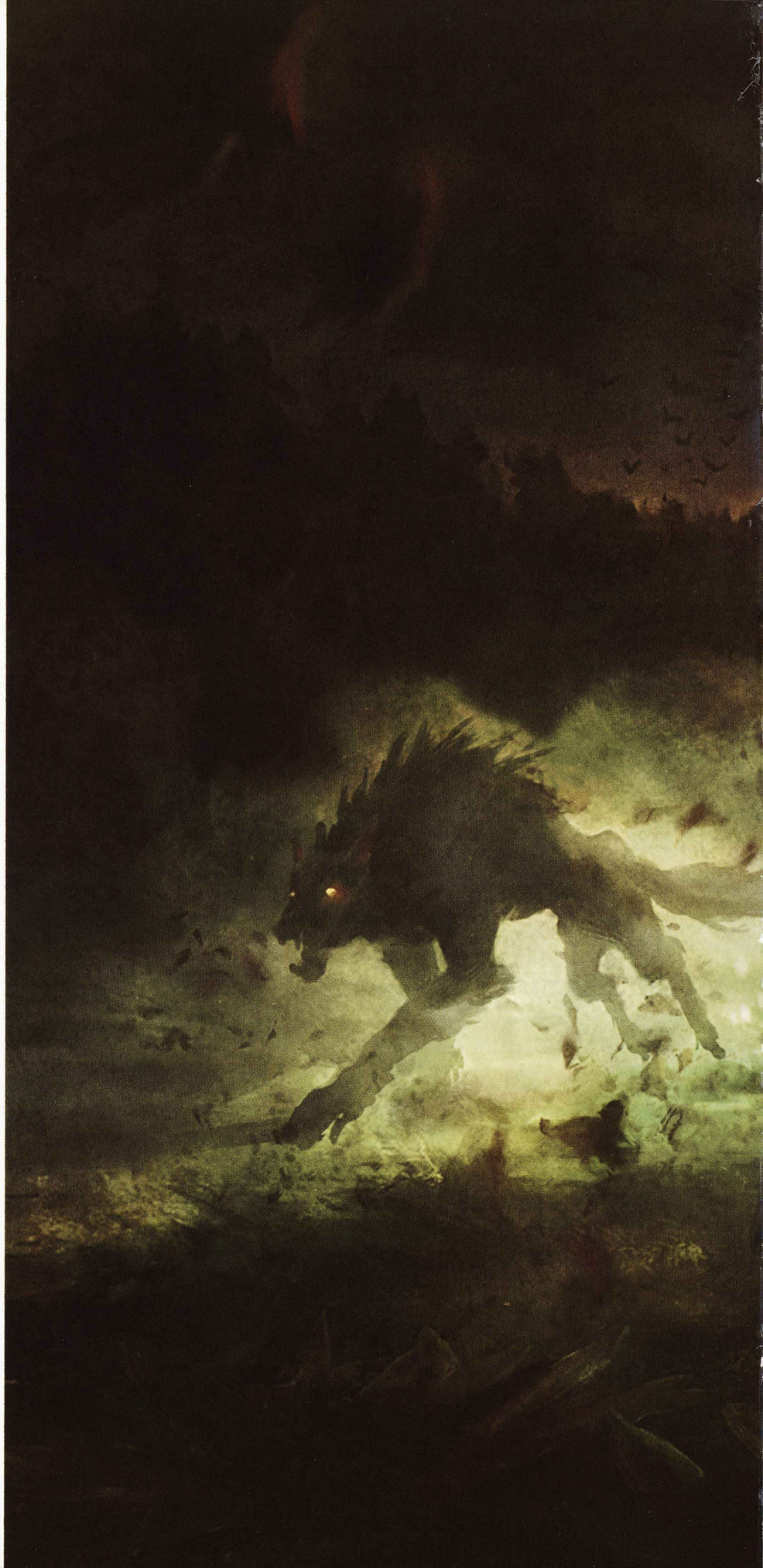
The Nature of Lycanthropy

Lycanthropy—the condition that turns humans into werewolves—is a supernatural curse that causes the victim's spiritual essence to become mingled with the wild essence of nature, symbolized by the wolf. The lycanthrope in effect has two souls, or a soul split between two essences. These two essences constantly battle for control. When the wild wolf-essence triumphs, the werewolf change occurs. This might explain why werewolves hunt humans so often; the wolf-essence desires to destroy the human side and triumph over humanity, and does so symbolically by brutally slaying humans.

> *"Werewolves are an unholy mix of a predator's instinct and a human's hatred."*
> —Alena, trapper of Kessig

Human Form: A Tenuous Hold on Civility. A person afflicted with lycanthropy is forever in doubt of his or her own urges and instincts. In human form, a werewolf feels the pull of the wolf's essence even while trying to integrate into polite society. A lycanthrope can feel the war of emotions in his or her heart, and as the moon grows full, conscience, religion, and personal restraint wield less and less influence. The full moon makes the change inevitable, but in fact, any strong emotion or traumatic experience can trigger the transformation.

Werewolves in either form seem to be able to tell a human-form lycanthrope by smell. Indeed, humans who are mysteriously spared during werewolf rampages are often suspected of being werewolves themselves.





Moonmist ➪ Ryan Yee



Curse of the Nightly Hunt ➢ Daarken

Canid Form: The Natural Killing Machine. Werewolves in canid form are beings of unparalleled savagery and strength. Their bodies are perfectly engineered for slaughter, with jaws capable of snapping bone and claws sharp enough to rip the entrails from a beast many times their size. Their minds are explosions of instinct and adrenaline, fed supernatural awareness from their heightened senses yet cognitively blind to almost everything but the kill. They can walk upright for manual dexterity or lope on four limbs for speed. Their howl is said to release the wolf's spirit within, a harrowing sound that fogs the air and chills the night. Werewolves in canid form cannot speak human languages, but seem to be able to communicate with each other on matters of hunting, dominance, and social hierarchy, as canines do in the wild.

The Transformation. The transformation process is harrowing for the lycanthrope and can be incredibly disturbing to any witnesses. The eyes change first, the whites darkening and the irises filling with color. The claws go next—the hands elongate, knifelike claws extend from the fingertips, and the thumbs form claws near the wrist. The muzzle thrusts forward out of the skull, and the sharp points of the teeth jut through the gums. Bones crack as they rearrange. Marrow spills into the bloodstream as ribs and skull fracture and telescope. Thick, wiry fur erupts through the skin, often pushing out normal human hair. The tailbone elongates and becomes a shaggy wolf's tail. Any clothing that was worn at the time of the change is generally torn to shreds and falls away. Inside the transformed body, metabolism speeds up, increasing the flow of blood and oxygen as well as glandular production, creating cravings for protein and fat.

If a werewolf dies in canid form, it changes back to human form, a process called death reversion.

"When a werewolf changes for the first time, that first howl is said to echo through the wilds till moonset." —Elder Rimheit

Aftermath. A werewolf that has just changed back to human form is usually naked, disoriented, and covered in the debris, wounds, and bloodstains of the previous night's hunt. He or she has flashes of memories left over from canid form, often accompanied by involuntary heart spasms and jolts of adrenaline, not unlike the symptoms of a panic attack. The days following a transformation are often filled with shame, guilt, and depression—and repression, as the lycanthrope struggles to feign normalcy, construct alibis, and hide evidence of his or her savage crimes.

Lycanthropes and the Moon

There's no doubt that the moon holds sway over werewolves. As the moon phases change, so does lycanthropy's influence over the werewolf. As the full moon approaches, the effectiveness of divine magic becomes dampened, and werewolves change more readily.

Blessed Silver. Werewolves in canid form are supernaturally strong and tough, and since the weakening of Avacynian magic, few protection spells have been able to harm them or keep them at bay. But werewolves do have a weakness: pure silver that has been ritually blessed by a powerful cleric of Avacyn can cause them great agony. According to alchemists, the purity of silver allows it to readily absorb divine magic. Thus, arrowheads, spearpoints, and other weapons made from blessed silver can be powerful instruments for fighting werewolves.

Silver and the Moon. For centuries, mages have presumed a relationship between the moon and silver, but the nature of that relationship remains a mystery. Respected astronomancer Jenrik of Nephalia once posited that Innistrad's moon is actually a vast desert composed of tiny grains of silver. He believed that any silver found on Innistrad actually originated from the moon's silver desert, and that terrestrial silver maintains a relationship with the moon's power. But he offered no explanation for why the moon seems to empower werewolves while silver harms them.

Full Moon's Rise ➽ Terese Nielsen



Bound by Moonsilver ➽ Joseph Meehan



Religion and Superstition

Humans destroy known werewolves when they can; all lycanthropes are seen as abominations and mass murderers. But werewolves are dangerous creatures to face head on, so wide-scale magical prevention is often employed in an attempt to curb werewolf predation. Regular and repeated application of Avacynian magic can help prevent the change to canid form. Roadside shrines, prayer, angelic rites, the blessings of accomplished clerics, and the presence of holy symbols all help bolster a werewolf's human spirit, helping the lycanthrope stay in human form. Some werewolves often stay within the city limits while in human form, surrounding themselves with their community and the influence of religion, whereas others venture into the wilderness, far from the wards and priests that keep their wolf essence in check. In any case, the full moon can overcome even powerful religious precautions. In addition, the power of angelic magic has waned along with the influence of Avacyn, and werewolf transformations have once again become more common and harder to predict.

Werewolf Superstitions. There are many theories as to how lycanthropy is caused or spread. Fueled by frightened exaggeration and misremembered anecdotes, suspicion and speculation run rampant among Innistrad's people, particularly in Kessig, where werewolves are most common. No consensus exists about how to detect, hunt, or cure werewolves, how many roam the wilds, what keeps them at bay, or what it all means for humanity.

Most sects of the Church of Avacyn hold that lycanthropy is a kind of demonic possession, but ritual exorcisms have not successfully purged the affliction. Afflicted humans appear to become werewolves at some point in their lives rather than being born so, although there are sporadic (and chilling) tales of child werewolves in remote areas. Many alchemists and wolfhunters believe that werewolves are sterile, and only reproduce by cursing humans with lycanthropy; however, many commoners fear that they might be able to interbreed with humans or give birth to their own kind.

"You don't find many old werewolf hunters." —Paulin, trapper of Somberwald



Furor of the Bitten ➤ Randy Gallegos



Silverstrike ➤ Lius Lasahido

Transmitting the Curse

The exact means by which a person is subjected to the curse of lycanthropy is unknown and clouded by superstition. It's likely that the curse can be imposed by a variety of different means—including intentional participation in a ritual meant to invoke the curse. Sometimes, it seems that a werewolf howlpack chooses a victim; certainly, most victims share a common experience of being called to join the pack.

The call comes at night, and the curse takes full hold over the course of the night. At moonrise, one or more werewolves howl in the darkness, calling out to the cursed victim. The howl seems to awaken the wolf spirit in the victim, who soon wanders out into the wilds as if sleepwalking. The victim runs with the werewolves, crashing through the woods with them, slowly taking on more and more traits of the canid form. Together they hunt and kill their prey—usually woodland game, but sometimes humans or even other werewolves are the quarry. When the cursed one bites into the bloody flesh of the prey, the curse is complete. The victim transforms fully into canid form, greeted by a bone-chilling chorus of howls from the rest of the pack. The First Hunt is complete, and a new werewolf is made. Later, the new lycanthrope usually staggers back to civilization half-naked, barely recognizable through the blood and offal and wilderness debris, and nearly mad from fear and shameful memories.



Joint Assault ➢ Raymond Swanland

Werewolves and Avacyn

Just as werewolves are creatures of change, in recent years they've changed dramatically in role and character on Innistrad, as well as form.

Avacyn Restored. After Avacyn was freed from the Helvault, the forces of light pushed back against Innistrad's supernatural threats. In werewolf-afflicted areas like Kessig, cathars, inquisitors, and angels instituted a purge of werewolves. Many of the larger howlpacks were rapidly depleted, and some howlpacks broke apart entirely.

The Cursemute. At the climax of one purge of werewolves near the village of Gatstaf, Avacyn cast a holy spell called the cursemute, which universally dampened the effects of the lycanthropic change. The spell also transformed some werewolves into noble, bipedal wolf creatures called wolfir, merging their human and wolf essences into a single, unchanging being. All lycanthrope attacks seemed to halt, and it appeared that the wolfir were the only remnants of werewolves left on Innistrad.

The Time of the Wolfir. The wolfir are huge, mystical, wolflike guardians created by Avacyn's cursemute. They resemble semihumanoid wolves, standing from seven to ten feet tall or more, with ghostly vapor wafting from their thick hide. They are former werewolves brought into divine balance: a harmonious merging of the wild spirit of nature with the human spirit. They feed on forest prey such as deer and boar, but their true purpose is to hunt and slay the enemies of Avacyn.

> "By my power, werewolves shall become the wolfir, our allies in combat against darkness." —Avacyn's Cursemute Decree

The Return of Werewolves. Recently, as Avacyn's wise judgment and leadership seem to have evaporated, the effects of the cursemute have waned as well. The virtuous wolfir are in sharp decline, and true lycanthropes have returned with renewed vigor. The werewolves are back, and it seems they are set to punish Innistrad for the wolf hunts and purges that struck at their number, marking a new era of danger for the moonlit wilds of the plane. Villagers have redoubled their suspicion about anyone who might show signs of lycanthropy, and fears of werewolves have brought increased patrols to thoroughfares.

The Fate of the Wolfir. The wolfir did not vanish when the cursemute ended. The effects varied by individual. Some wolfir became werewolves again, as their human and wolf essences resumed their internal struggle. And a few wolfir have retained their combined humanoid-wolf form. Tragically, all of them are spurned by both their worlds: wolfir are now ostracized by distrustful human societies and are preferentially hunted by killer werewolves. As such, few wolfir remain in Innistrad.

Blessings of Nature ☞ Anthony Francisco



Werewolf Howlpacks

Werewolves are often lone hunters, stalking and killing humans as singular monsters in towns and villages. But some werewolves form loose social groups in the wild, called howlpacks. The populations of howlpacks wax and wane like the moon, gaining and losing members as individual lycanthropes enter or leave their canid state. Some werewolves seem to be continually drawn back to their familiar howlpack, returning to it time after time as soon as they drop their human guise and reenter the wild. Howlpacks can be tiny hunting parties of just a few werewolves, or can be massive hordes of over a hundred. Howlpacks are often led by single alphas (male or female) that dominate the pack. Alphas must often defend their power by defeating challengers in combat.

The Krallenhorde

When an average Innistrad human thinks of a werewolf pack, he or she thinks of the Krallenhorde, Innistrad's largest howlpack. The Krallenhorde existed in some form for decades before the return of Avacyn, composed of anywhere from fifty to over two hundred werewolves depending on the availability of prey and the phase of the moon. The Krallenhorde survived the cursemute intact, and has drawn new members from all provinces of Innistrad. The alpha of Krallenhorde is the werewolf Ulrich, a cunning and perceptive werewolf who remains in the wild and runs with the howlpack even when he reverts to human form.

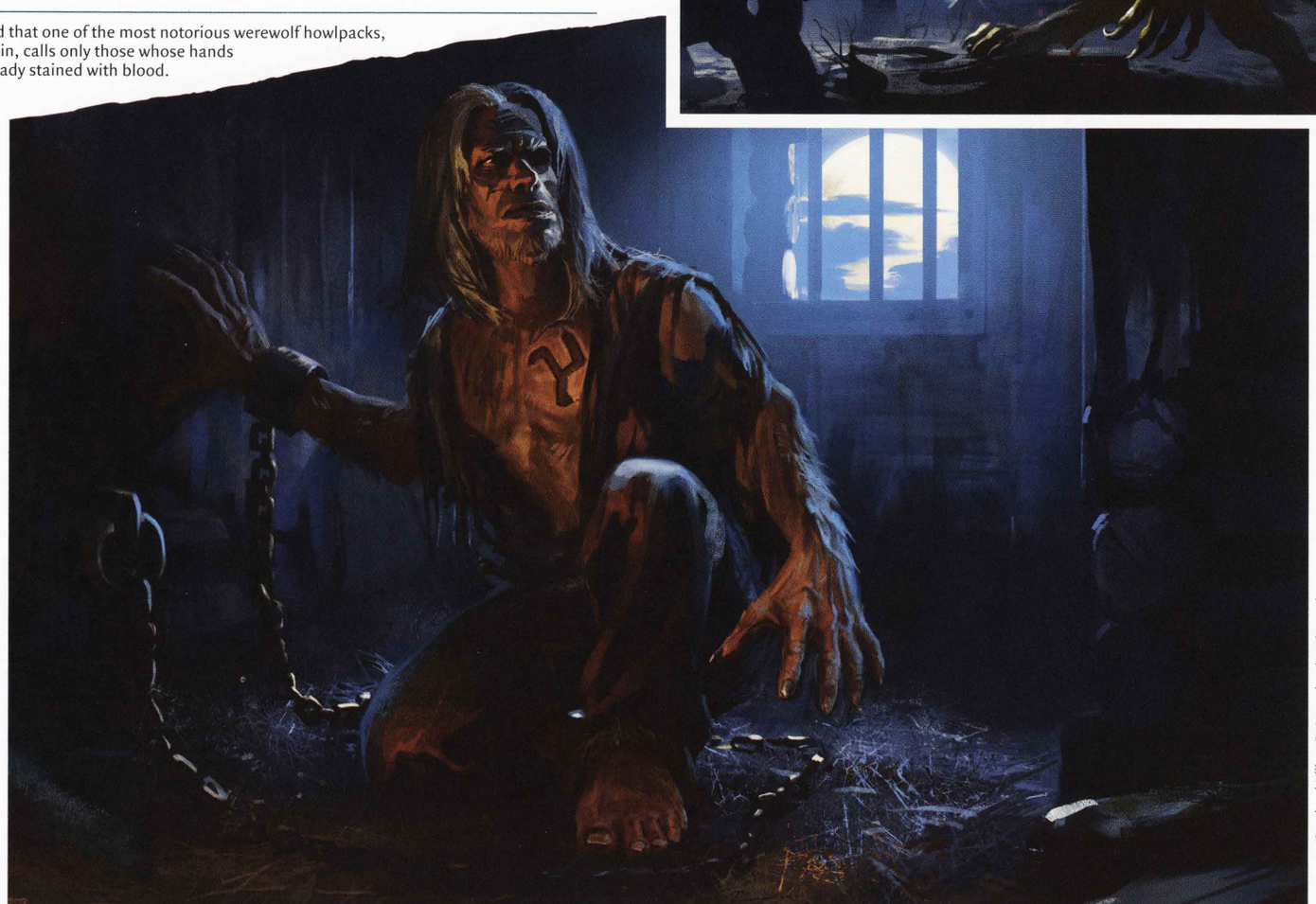
The Vildin Pack

An especially infamous group of werewolves has appeared since the end of the cursemute. The rumor goes that the Vildin Pack calls into its ranks only those humans who have committed murder before becoming a werewolf—that its members are all killers both in human and werewolf form. Whether or not that's true of all of them, the Vildin werewolves are unmistakably vicious and barbaric predators, often using their time in human form to set inn fires, spread lies, and stir up chaos that will lead to better, more frenzied hunting for the pack. The Vildin Pack dwells among the Natterknolls of Kessig and the Stensian highlands, preying on villagers and stray travelers in both, and are led by a long-braided escaped convict named Rahilda.



Branded Howler ▶ Deruchenko Alexander

It is said that one of the most notorious werewolf howlpacks, the Vildin, calls only those whose hands are already stained with blood.



Convicted Killer ▶ Deruchenko Alexander



Tovolar's Magehunter ➪ Anthony Palumbo

"Tovolar, my master. Gather the howlpack, for the Hunter's Moon is nigh and Thraben's walls grow weak." —Reelah, Shaman of the Mondronen

The Mondronen and Leeraug

After Avacyn's return, many werewolves were purged by silver and spell, and some howlpacks fell apart from loss of members. The Mondronen, which once performed dark forms of blood magic, and the Leeraug, which were said to hunt under the dark of the new moon and favored preying on youths, were two of the more prominent howlpacks that collapsed. Some of their stray werewolves still hunt, and some are stirred by vengeance toward their neighbors and fellow townsfolk who hunted their kind with such cruelty.

The Silverfurs

As Avacyn's protective magic wavered, the cursemute ended, letting werewolves return to feed on Innistrad again. The wolfir have largely disappeared, having been hunted down by humans and werewolves alike. But a ragged handful of these wolfir have formed a kind of virtuous howlpack, calling themselves the Silverfurs. Two friends called Johanna and Pavel guide the Silverfurs, keeping them on the move, trying to find a way to help while also keeping their remaining number alive.

Vampires

The vampires of Innistrad form a civilization that stands alongside and in direct competition with humanity, presenting the greatest danger to human life on the plane. Like werewolves, vampires were originally human, and they view themselves as successors to the weak human race—even as they recognize (grudgingly) that they require humans to feed upon. Vampires are the embodiment of self-indulgent desire, pursuing hedonistic cravings that humans suppress out of a sense of morality and propriety. In their stately manor houses, sprawling courts, and towering castles, four great family lines of vampires show varying degrees of aggressiveness toward their human prey.

The return of Avacyn and the angels brought a bloody purge of vampires that checked both their power and their collective ego. As the angels have started descending into madness, however, many vampires have taken the opportunity to reassert themselves—even as others follow the angels into insanity.

"To survive, we must embrace the savagery we knew in our race's infancy." —Edgar Markov

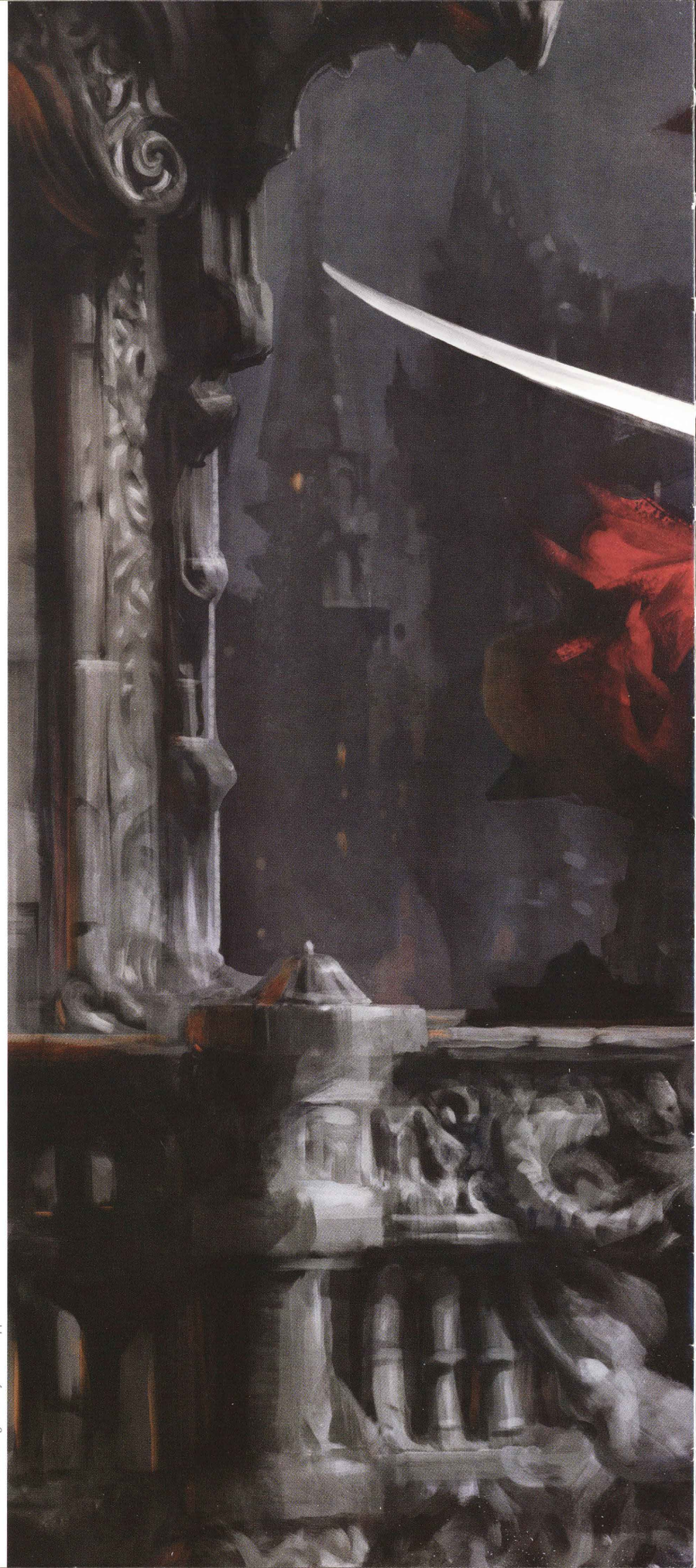
The Nature of Vampirism

Vampirism on Innistrad is an anointing that persists and is perpetuated by magic—not a curse, a disease, or a state of undeath, but what the vampires themselves somewhat euphemistically call a "condition of the blood."

Vampire Appearance. Vampires have distinctive eyes, appearing as pools of gold or silver surrounded by black. Their hair is often black but can also be deep purple, dark magenta, burgundy, or even dark blue-green. Some vampires wear wigs for variety, novelty, or to disguise themselves more easily among humans.

Vampires have pale skin that is cool to the touch. Their canine teeth are very slightly pronounced at all times, and they extend significantly when they bite to feed. Vampires also tend to have long and slightly curved fingernails.

Vampire Powers. Vampires have three supernatural characteristics that are shared across all bloodlines: agelessness, enhanced strength (approximately double that of a human), and an aura of silence that emanates from them at will to a radius of two feet. Given time and mana, elder vampires can learn powerful magic of many different kinds—including powers commonly attributed to all vampires, such as flight, a hypnotic gaze, the ability to transform into other forms (such as that of a bat or a mist), and so on.



Markov Dreadknight ◆ Cynthia Sheppard



The Glamer. Many vampires learn a unique form of illusion-like magic that enables them to move among humans undetected. Called the glamer, this mind-affecting magic alters what nearby humans think they're perceiving, as opposed to true illusion magic that changes the subject's appearance. As such, particularly strong-willed humans can sometimes shake off the effects of the glamer and see the vampire's true form.

Vampire Vulnerabilities. Weapons cut from living wood are particularly effective against vampires, though any weapon can harm or kill them. A vampire can't cross running water that shows the reflection of the moon, and water blessed by Avacyn burns vampire flesh like acid. The holy symbols of Avacyn, blessed in the proper rituals of the church, could once fill a vampire with a paralyzing fear and a desire to flee, but with Avacyn's madness those rites have lost their efficacy.

"I can make you dance to my tune like a puppet, your very blood eager to obey." —Olivia Voldaren

Twins of Maurer Estate ➤ Darek Zabrocki





Vampiric Fury ➽ Matt Stewart

A vampire's reflection in silver (including a silver-backed glass mirror) appears as the vampire would have looked without the vampiric condition—neither its true appearance nor its glamer, but a normal human, flaws and all. For that reason, vampires go to great lengths to avoid mirrors, and the presence of silver in any form is unsettling to them.

The Unquenchable Thirst. A vampire needs to consume the blood of living humans for sustenance. At a minimum, during one cycle of the moon a vampire must drink as much blood as an average adult human contains (about five liters). Without enough blood, the vampire dries and shrivels in a matter of days, eventually crumbling to dust. Given the opportunity, most vampires will happily consume more blood than they strictly need.

Typically, a vampire drinks so much blood from a human that the victim dies, but sometimes the vampire is interrupted and the human survives and recovers. Such survivors are often met with suspicion and fear, but they never become vampires unless an actual exchange of blood has occurred—which is always a deliberate act on the vampire's part. These survivors are often plagued by unsettling (and sometimes disturbingly erotic) dreams for years, but they suffer no other lasting consequences.

Animal blood or blood drawn from a dead human is both foul-tasting and indigestible to vampires, as a particular consequence of the ritual magic that created the race. All the efforts of vampire alchemists over the centuries to create a suitable substitute have failed.

Ordinary food and drink don't nourish vampires, and too much can cause pain and fatigue. Of course, this doesn't stop the hedonistic vampires from indulging in the sensual pleasures of fine cuisine and exquisite wines.

Vampire Personality. The selfish and arrogant vampires view humans as cattle—very clever cattle, perhaps, but still basically animals compared to the elegance and sophistication of vampire society. Of course, that "sophistication" consists of treachery and debauchery, where grudges and betrayals are a source of endless amusement. Their endless revels, feasts, romances, and intrigues are rife with decadence and hedonism. Vampires overindulge in everything: sex, food, drink, entertainment, sleep, scheming, and so on.





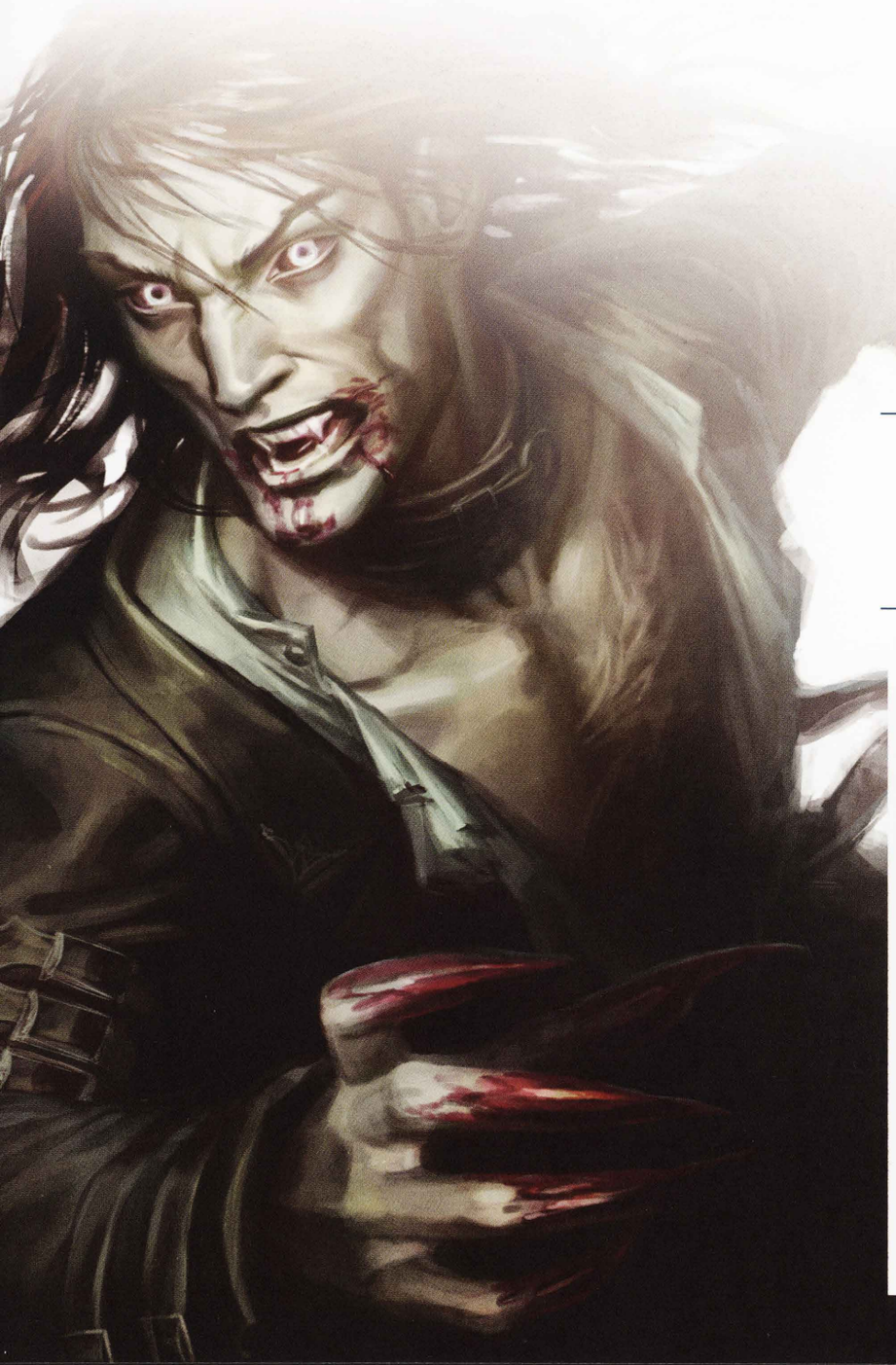
Nearheath Stalker ▻ Michael C. Hayes

Vampire Bloodlines

In Innistrad's ancient history, a human alchemist and healer named Edgar Markov sought to preserve his life and those of his family members. As old age began to claim him, he despaired of finding an alchemical solution and turned to black magic. Not long after, the demon Shilgengar appeared to Markov and revealed a means by which Markov could achieve immortality: a dark ritual of blood magic that involved drinking an angel's blood.

The vampires of Innistrad are all descended from twelve ancient sires—the congregation that participated in Markov's blasphemous ritual. Of these twelve ancient bloodlines, three have died out completely and five are so few in number as to be irrelevant. The remaining four constitute the vast majority of Innistrad's vampires.

Falkenrath Gorger ➢ Anna Steinbauer



Markov

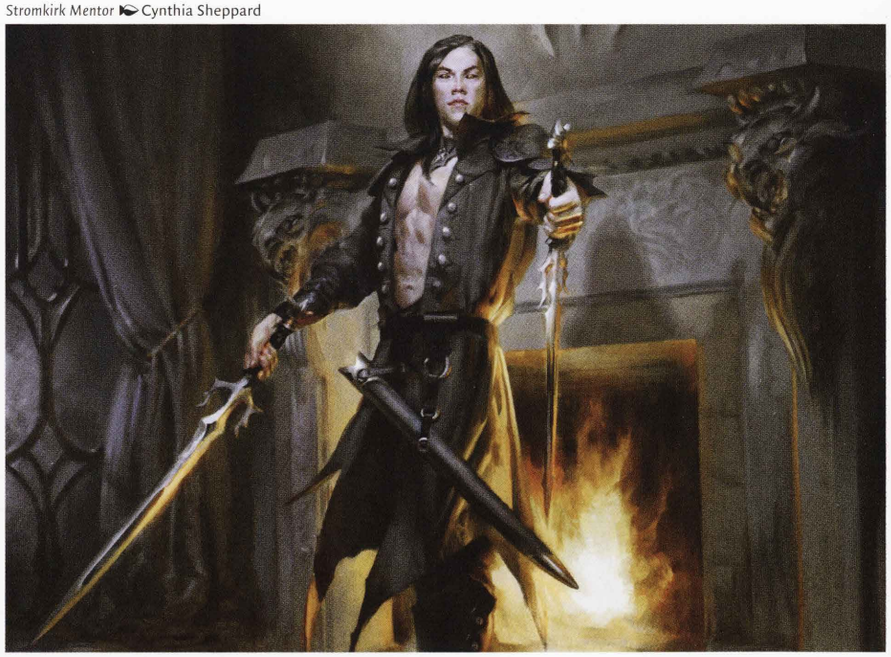
The bloodline of Edgar Markov, naturally, was always the most prestigious vampire family. The line was liberal in siring new vampires over the centuries, so its members were found in all four provinces of Innistrad. However, this also made them prominent targets for Avacyn's wrath when she emerged from the Helvault. Political infighting (a favorite vampire pastime) left them vulnerable to the angels' assault, and Nahiri's attack on Markov Manor killed or scattered many of the bloodline's most prominent members, including Edgar Markov himself. Though Sorin Markov will make an effort to reassemble the Markov survivors, the bloodline seems unlikely to ever recover its former prestige and power.

Voldaren

The progenitor of the Voldaren line, Olivia Voldaren, was in life an antisocial woman who lived far away from human civilization in a manor built with her seemingly boundless wealth. Olivia has always been known for hosting extravagant parties, but she remains aloof from her guests—and the endless scheming and intrigue they carry out behind their masquerade disguises. Like their progenitor, Voldaren vampires tend to live in the distant borderlands of Innistrad's provinces, and that remoteness has left them relatively unaffected by Avacyn's return and the angels' madness.

"I have seen a hundred mortal families rise and fall. I shall outlast a thousand more."
—Olivia Voldaren

Stromkirk Mentor ➢ Cynthia Sheppard





Olivia Voldaren ◆ Eric Deschamps

Falkenrath

The first Falkenrath was a renowned falconer whose grasping and predatory personality matched his birds. These traits seem to have been passed down through his bloodline. Falkenrath vampires were bold in walking among humans, taking pleasure in choosing their victims from deep within human communities that thought themselves safe. Since Avacyn's return, however, their boldness has become a liability, drawing the angels' wrathful attention. Most of the Falkenrath castles and estates in Stensia have been destroyed, and the vampires that remain are generally solitary hunters, voracious and brutal. Since Avacyn's madness, the Falkenrath vampires have abandoned their glamer, and even their natural appearance has grown more savage and bestial. They attribute this change to a plague they call the "boiling blood," and the ones who have utterly abandoned themselves to it, becoming ravenous beasts with no remnant of their old nobility and pride, are called "gorgers."

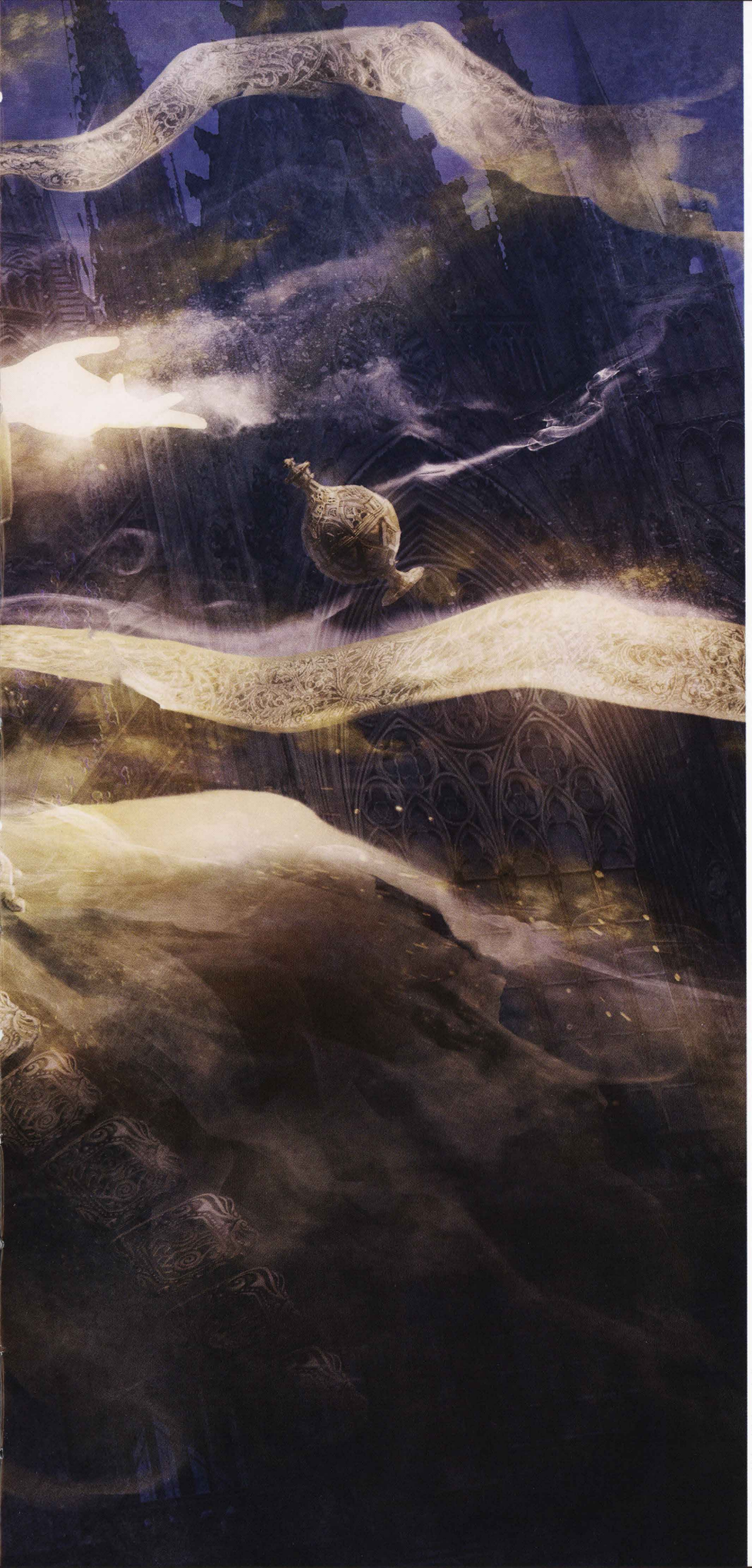
Stromkirk

The vampires of the Stromkirk line have concentrated their power outside of Stensia, in the bustling human towns on the Nephalian coast. Their disguising glamers are more powerful and sophisticated than those of other vampires, allowing them to move and hunt more freely within these large populations. The progenitor of the line, Runo Stromkirk, was a high priest in the service of an ancient god of the sea and storms, and the vampires of his line are drawn to the new cults arising in Nephalia—particularly the one devoted to the Kralmar. Runo himself has occasionally worshipped alongside mad human cultists on the Nephalian coast.

The Madness of Vampires

The madness plaguing all of Innistrad affects vampires in a variety of ways. Madness amplifies the central characteristics of vampires—their passion, decadence, and cruelty. Some vampires overfeed and slaughter all their human servants, growing bloated like swollen ticks. Some try to feed on nonhumans, including other vampires—or even themselves. Others come to believe that they are human, trying to sustain themselves on human food until they wither and die.





Bygone Bishop ◣ Jason A. Engle

Geists

Innistrad is filled with the ghosts of the human dead. These spirits, called geists, take many forms. Some are protective ancestors, some are simply lost between life and death, and others are vengeful creatures bent on resolving conflicts they couldn't in life. While Avacyn stood as guardian over Innistrad, she and the angels of Flight Alabaster ushered the spirits of the departed into the Æther where they rejoined the essence of the plane. In her absence—and now her madness—many spirits cling to the world of the living, unable or unwilling to find their way to the Blessed Sleep.

"To show geists pity is to prolong their agonies. Whether they know it or not, they seek the Blessed Sleep, and we are to give it to them."
—Mikaeus, the Lunarch

Geists exist in the space between the material and immaterial realms. Although their nature and substance are fundamentally insubstantial, allowing them to pass through walls or disappear entirely from view, they can affect the material world in a variety of ways. Some can make themselves—or parts of themselves, or even items they hold—solid for a brief time, at least long enough to slash open a throat with a weapon or claws. Others operate at the level of the mind, instilling deadly fear in their victims or, like illusions, turning the beliefs of the living against them. Their victims believe so strongly in the harm being inflicted on them that they actually suffer injury. Some geists can affect temperatures, using cold to numb or freeze the living—particularly when humans get lost on the moors or wander too far into the bogs. Some use psychokinetic power to wrap objects around themselves (such as brambles, chains, spikes, or glass), and then wield them against the living.

Malevolent and Benign

Geists have always been a presence on Innistrad. Some manifest on the plane only because of a grudge or regret powerful enough to disturb the Blessed Sleep of the body to which they were connected. Others linger because of a strong desire to protect their living kin, or because of some obsession forcing them to continue a duty they performed in life.

Ghostly Possession. Most geists have the ability to take control of corporeal bodies, including those still inhabited by the living. To possess a living person, a geist must overpower its victim's will. It's much easier to inhabit a corpse or a zombie. As long as the possession lasts, the geist has complete control over the victim, who is forced to watch their body act without any ability to stop it.

"Not even a roaring fire could thaw the chill it put in my heart." —Vonn, *geist trapper*

Spectral Rider ➤ Igor Kieryluk





Geist-Honored Monk ➤ Clint Cearley

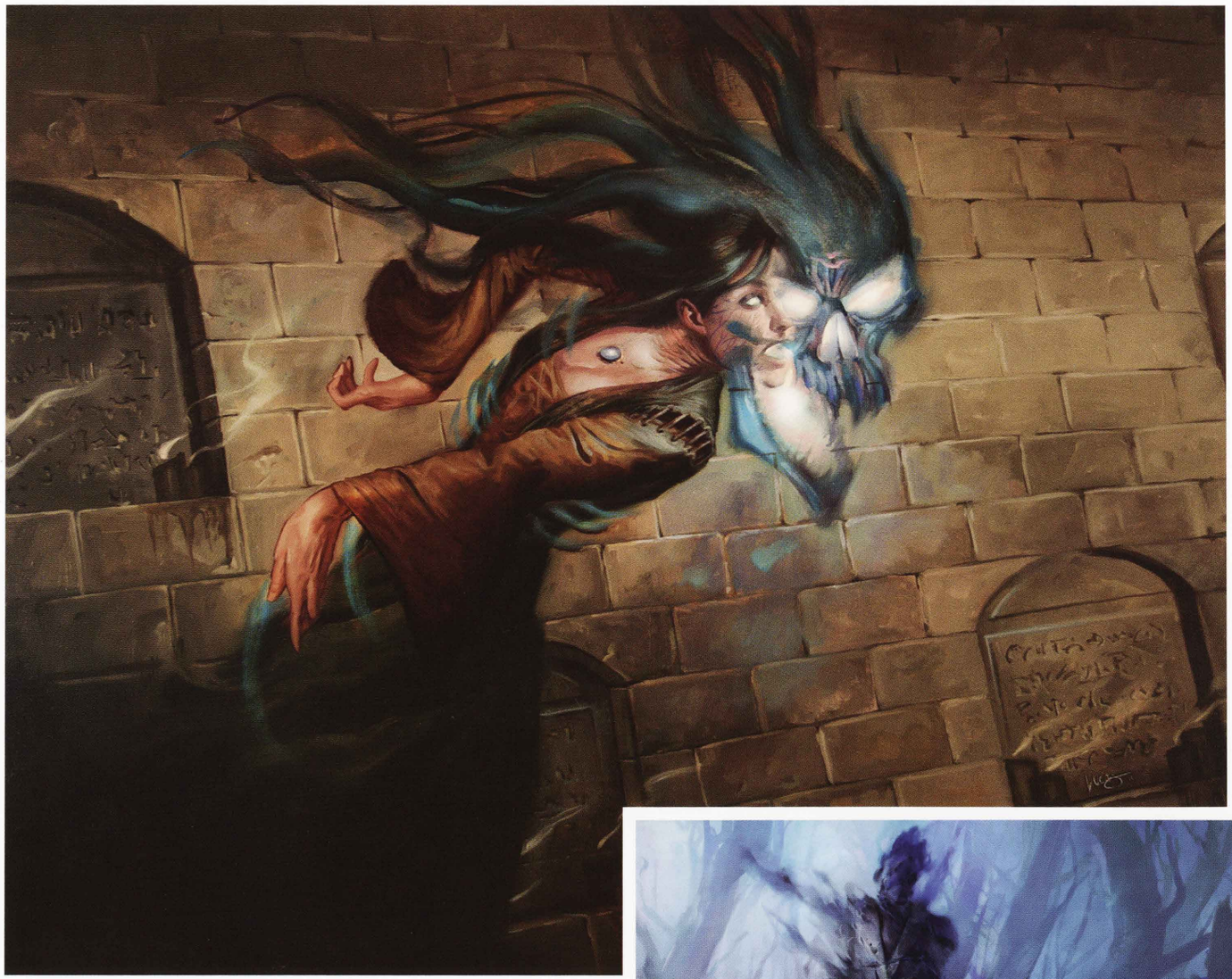
Faith's Power. Some of the rites of Avacyn's church are intended to disperse spirits or exorcise possessing geists, banishing them to the Æther. Without Avacyn supporting those rites, however, the clergy have lost much of their power over spirits. Some force-mages, using primal nature magic, or cultists with demonic power, can bind, control, or dispel geists, but the reach of these practitioners is small compared to the church of Avacyn, leaving most of Innistrad vulnerable to haunting spirits. The best check against hostile geists is the presence of benevolent ones, often the protective spirits of departed family members.

Geists as a Resource. Necro-alchemists perform experiments using captured geists, channeling their power as a source of energy. Also called geistmages, these practitioners bind geists to weapons forged of spiritsteel, produce geistflame by consuming geists in elaborate machines, or harness geist energy to power laboratories full of bizarre contraptions.

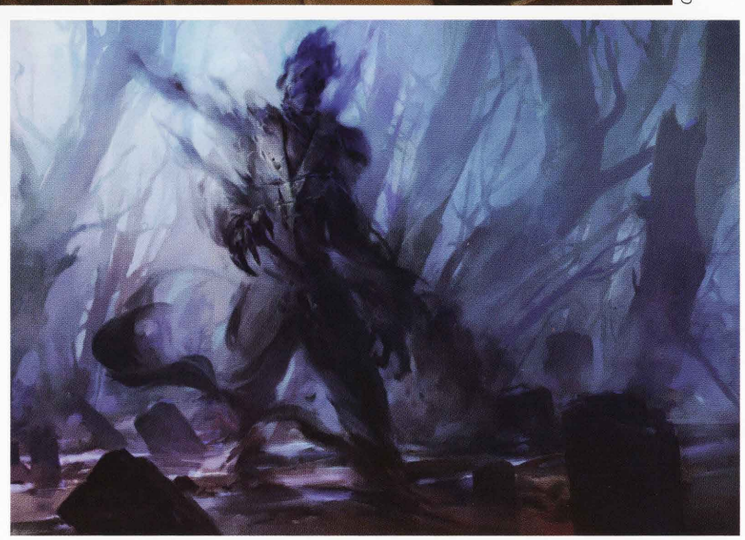
White Geists

As creatures of pure spirit, geists are partially sustained by the mana that flows through the plane. Thus, each geist is closely associated with one or more colors of mana, and its nature and attitude is shaped by the characteristics of that mana. Many white-aligned geists are harmless or even protective spirits of dead family and friends who haunt the living out of a sense of duty, fealty, responsibility, or love. Malevolent white-aligned geists do exist, however, and are usually twisted by guilt, feelings of failure, or unrighted wrongs. These geists appear as spectral images of themselves as they looked at the moment of their death, faded and washed out to white. When a white-aligned geist possesses a living person, it is generally for that person's own protection.

The Drogskol. Shortly after Avacyn's disappearance, a large militia in Gavony fell to a horde of the unhallowed. Their ghosts still patrol the moors, looking for their vanquishers—but also keeping the people of the Moorlands under their protection.



Ghastly Haunting ➭ Lucas Graciano



Farbog Revenant ➭ Min Yum

Blue Geists

The spirits of selfish and self-centered people become blue geists, and white geists can also drift to blue alignment as they lose their memories. These geists look like floating, tattered clothes, with no head or only a misty skull, often covered in chains and locks. They linger in the places they frequented in life, trying to remember the lives they have forgotten and re-creating their habitual actions in a grotesque parody of life, though they don't know that is what they are doing, or why. They are prone to performing repetitive actions—knocking, arranging things in patterns, stacking objects, making marks, and so on. When they possess the living, they often induce this same kind of obsessive behavior.

Blue geists are most common in Nephalia, and thus are the most readily accessible spirits for necro-alchemists to use in their experiments. Since they retain little of their past identities, they usually don't have loved ones to protest their use in this way.

Niblis Geists. Some blue geists are drawn to water, frost, and mist—even the mist of the breath. These geists cause chill winds or the sensation of icy hands, and often appear as vague humanoid shapes or giant faces in the ever-present mists of Nephalia. They possess the living by attaching themselves to the mist of the breath and following it back inside the body.

"Beware the seagrafs just off the shore. These waters are filled with hungry geists looking for an easy meal." —Captain Eberhart

Sturmgeists. Multiple blue-aligned geists sometimes coalesce together into a giant storm of wailing voices, howling winds, and ghostly faces in the clouds. These seem to arise from a collection of geists with a common origin, such as a crew of drowned sailors or the victims of a massacre.

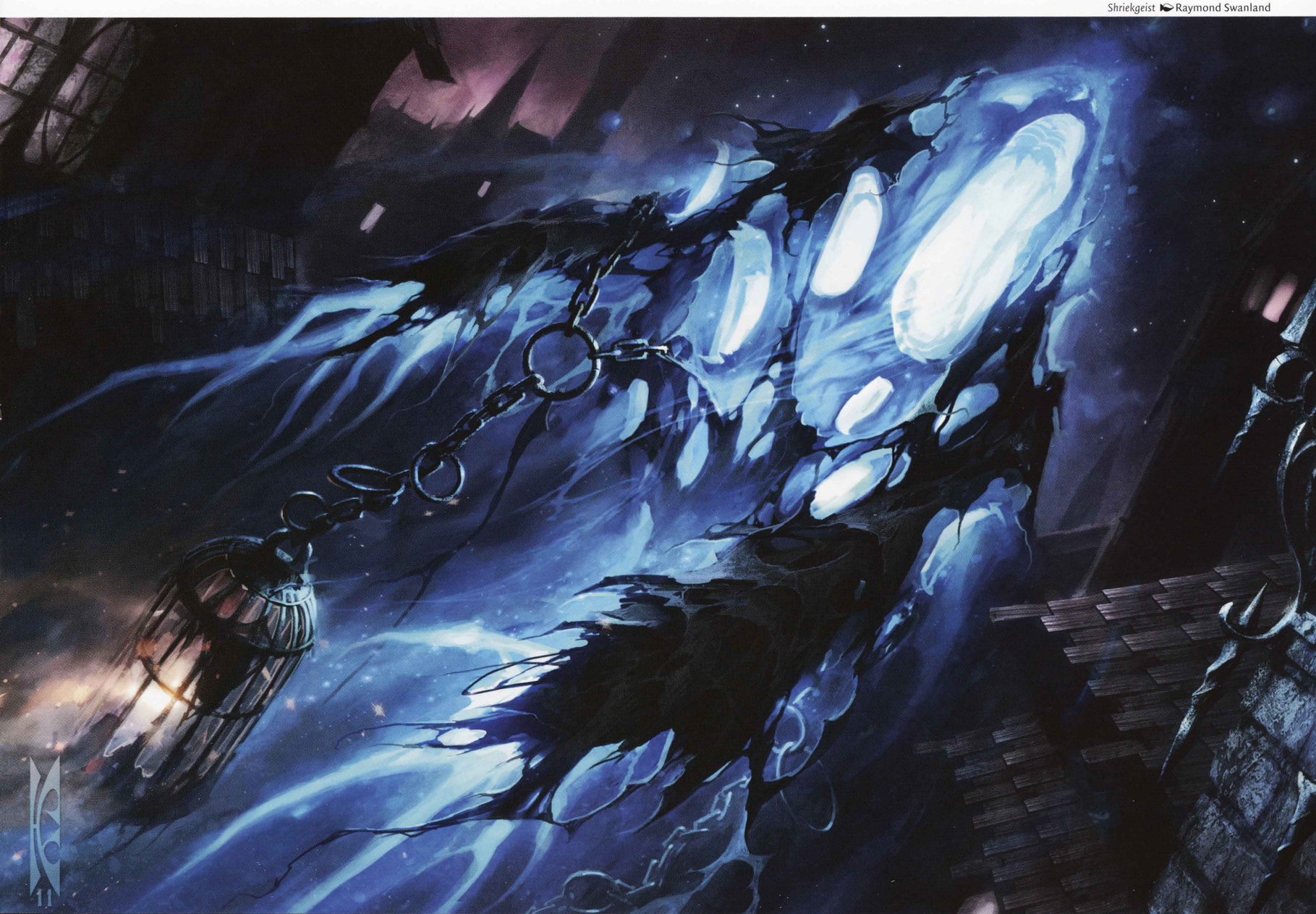
Black Geists

The spirits of murderers, thieves, and bandits return as black geists. If they had lived, these people would have been prime candidates to become demons. As geists, they appear much as they did in life, but with blank, featureless faces. These geists hate the living and eternally hunger for life, power, or the settling of a wicked grudge, with full memory of their past lives. If they are not appeased by offerings of food, goods, or even blood, these geists can be responsible for disease, accidents, and death. When they possess the living, they force the victim to commit terrible crimes of violence and murder, and they often leave the victim severely injured, permanently crippled, or dying.

Banshees. The geists of witches that die forlorn return as angry, shrieking geists that wail throughout the night without ever drawing breath.

Corpse Candles. These animate geistflames manifest as eerie lights that wander across fens and bogs dimming and brightening as they move. Sometimes they make a sound like a crying child or lost calf. Those that try to follow the corpse candles are lost in the wet peat, or suffer even more grisly fates at the hands of the geist itself.

Shriekgeist ➪ Raymond Swanland



Other Geists and Spirits

Other spirits—human and nonhuman—are found throughout Innistrad, though they are less common than other kinds of geists.

Poltergeists. Human spirits motivated by fury sometimes return as red-aligned geists. These are often the spirits of people whose corpses were raised by ghoulcallers.

Woodland Geists. Rarely, human spirits return as benevolent green-aligned geists. Similar to white geists, these spirits protect homes nestled in the forest and keep watch over orchards and groves. Some of them are the spirits of forcemages.

Nature and Animal Spirits. Not properly geists, green-aligned spirits also include nature spirits and spirit animals. Some of these are relatively benign, including beautiful nature spirits wrapped in vine and thorn. Cold-burning geistflames made of unnatural fire seem unconcerned with human life, but often lead travelers through the woods and bogs into danger. Others—tiergeists that possess animals and shimmer through their mouths and eyes, howling spirit wolves, shrieking spirit birds, vindictive crop spoilers that vex farmers and druids, and the malign kindercatches that steal children from the forest villages of Kessig—are as fierce and deadly as any black geist. Some spirit birds are blue-aligned, and at least one powerful kind of elemental spirit—the malignus, like the one that destroyed Estwald—is fiery and red-aligned.

Raging Poltergeist ➢ Slawomir Maniak



Somberwald Mantle ➪ Volkan Baga

"Pick not the rotten fruit, but neither touch the best. Leave those as an offering for our unseen guests."
—Radwick, *farmer of Gatstaf*



Kindercatch ➪ Terese Nielsen

Demons

Demons are the dark counterparts of angels—malevolent creatures of raw black mana. Some were once humans who sold their souls for power, and all are utterly corrupt and evil. When they first rose to prominence on Innistrad, Avacyn set out to destroy them. One by one, she engaged them in battle and emerged triumphant—but every time one demon was slain, a new one emerged.

Avacyn came to realize that, as creatures of pure mana, demons could not be utterly destroyed. When a demon died, its essence was scattered for a time, but would soon coalesce again into a new form. Thus, Avacyn's mantra became "What cannot be destroyed will be bound." Rather than slaying demons, she imprisoned them in the Helvault, which Sorin had created at the same time he made Avacyn herself. With the proper incantations and ritual sorceries, Avacyn and her host could cause any object, animate or inanimate, to be drawn into the Helvault and held in stasis. So the angels slowly purged the greatest demons from Innistrad until one mighty fiend confronted Avacyn—the demon named Griselbrand.

Avacyn and Griselbrand battled for four full days. Finally, in a desperate last effort, Avacyn used all her remaining strength to drive Griselbrand into the Helvault. The silver block slowly blackened and tarnished as the archdemon was drawn into it, but as his own last act the demon lashed out and impaled Avacyn on his terrible claw. As she was impaled, she was drawn into the Helvault herself, and evil had free rein over Innistrad once more.

With the sundering of the Helvault and Avacyn's return, demons faced a mixed blessing. Released from the prison where some of them had been held for centuries, the demons spread across the plane like a plague. But Avacyn and her host drove the demons back into hiding. Demons still could not be entirely destroyed, but the strength of Avacynian magic in the wake of the angel's return meant that a slain demon's essence took longer to coalesce into a new demonic form than it did in Avacyn's early days. Demons worked quickly to make pacts with cultists and witches, extending their influence into the mortal world while removing themselves from easy reach of the angels.

As it did during Avacyn's absence, the most prominent demon cult in Innistrad exists within the very highest levels of the hierarchy of Avacyn's church. The influence of the Skirsdag Cult is strong within the Lunarch Council, and the cultists use that influence to whip the church into a murderous frenzy in response to the angels' madness, launching the terrible inquisition that has proven to be as great a threat as the angels themselves. Demons remain hidden, but their reach is greater than it has ever been.

"He is judge, jury, and executioner because he killed them all." —Bishop Cawle of Elgaud

Reaper from the Abyss ➢ Matt Stewart





Balefire Dragon ➽ Eric Deschamps

Dragons and Wurms

Dragons are extremely rare on Innistrad, mostly confined to the remotest parts of the Geier Reach in Stensia. Most of these dragons are brutal fire-breathers that prey on any creature that strays into their territories. A few, though, are known to favor more monstrous prey, hunting vampires and flying into Kessig to feast on werewolves. Known as moonveil dragons, these extremely rare creatures have shimmering, transparent wings that gleam in the moonlight as they hunt at night. The sight of one is considered an inspiring good omen by those who fight the evils of the world.

Wurms are enormous serpentine creatures that burrow through the ground, consuming corpses. Fortunately quite rare, they are thought to be physical manifestations of corrupted green mana.



Charmbreaker Devils ➤ Dan Scott

Devils

Devils are infernal perpetrators of malicious mischief. They make up the personal armies and entourages of demons—demons' selfish desires and urges made flesh. They are cruel, gleefully sadistic, and have no regard for the safety of themselves or others. They delight in destruction, mayhem, and pain.

Devils stand about three or four feet tall, have faces full of needlelike teeth, and often have ruddy or deep red skin. They usually have one or two back-sweeping horns, and most of them have long, whiplike tails, but their morphology can vary from individual to individual. They are agile and can be passable fighters, but they do their best destructive work by sabotaging things of value and by inciting violence in others.

Devils are experts when it comes to generating and fueling bitter emotions. Demons are most interested in ways to demonstrate and expand their own power, seeking to tempt mortals to give up what's most precious to them. Devils, on the other hand, just want to repeatedly destroy and cause chaos in the most hilarious (to them) ways possible.

A devil's laugh is a brain-needle forged from pure spite. A devil's sense of humor isn't satisfied until someone trips, falls, breaks an ankle, loses the ability to work, loses the farm, dies penniless, and dooms his or her starving heirs. The further a prank goes, the more wrong it gets, and the more pain it causes, the harder a devil laughs. A devil will insult the memory of your dear, departed aunt—while waving at you with her own severed hands—just to bray at the look of anguish on your face. They have an uncanny knack for sniffing out exactly what you care for most just so they can break that thing and watch you despair. They can't be reasoned with—they are not creatures of reason. They can't be bargained with—they want nothing but your admission of defeat.

"Behind every devil's mayhem lurks a demon's scheme." —Rem Karolus, *Blade of the Inquisitors*

Constructed Creatures

Many of the evils that plague humanity on Innistrad arise from within humanity itself, and among the most terrible of these are creatures that are built by human hands. Some of these are animated by the magic of necro-alchemists or witches, but others are inhabited and given life by hostile spirits or other malign forces. They include gargoyles and scarecrows, haunted dolls and suits of armor, the weapons and juggernauts powered by geist energy, and homunculi created by stitchers and necro-alchemists.



Creepy Doll ➤ Matt Stewart

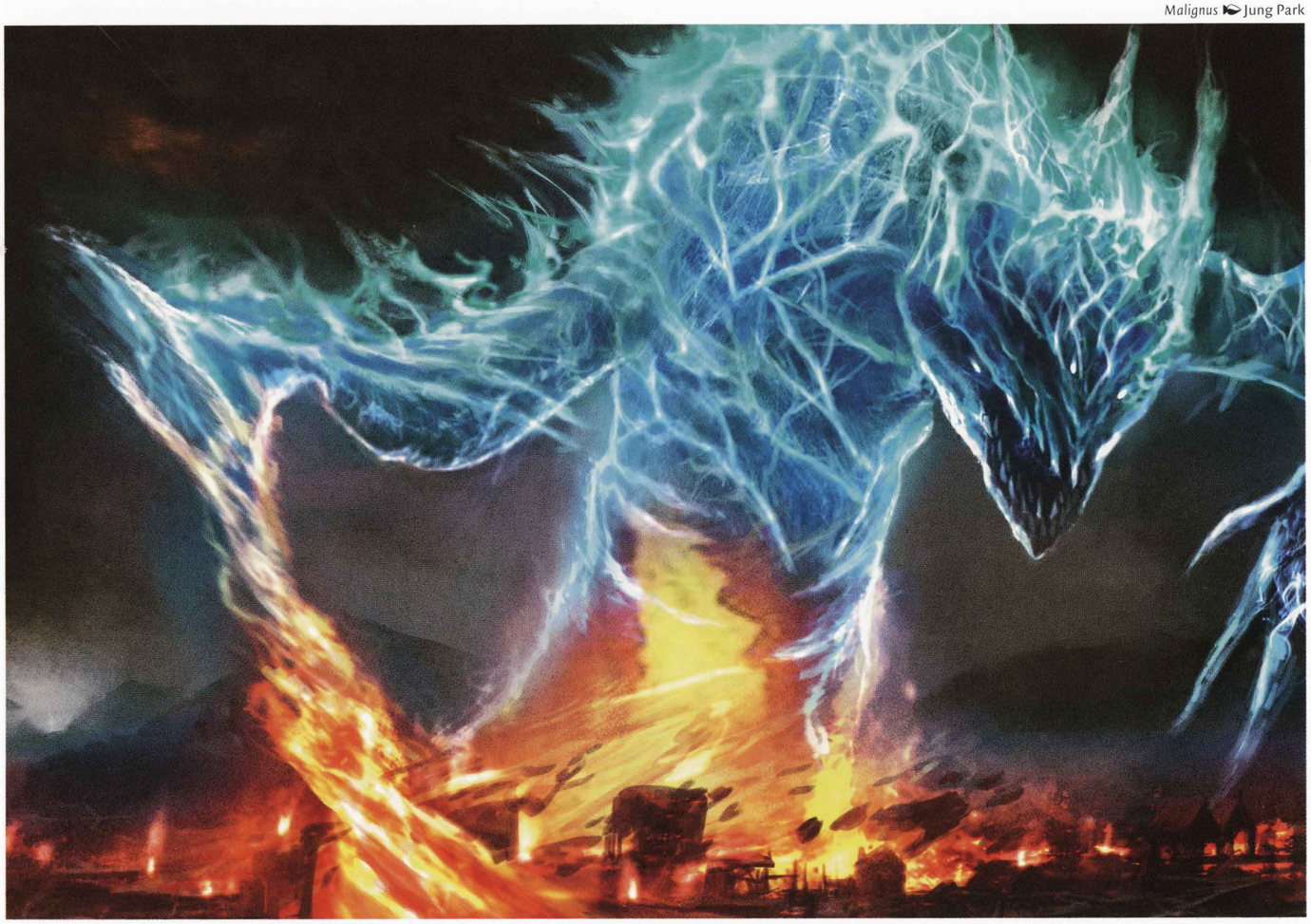
Elementals and Avatars

Elementals are manifestations of the forces of nature, and on Innistrad that generally means sinister forces. They arise from the twisted woods—the Ulvenwald and the Somberwald—that hide some of Innistrad's most fearsome monsters, or spawn from the fiery chasms that seethe like cauldrons of hate in the midst of the land. Like geists, they are closely associated with specific colors of mana.

Green-aligned elementals are usually gnarled humanoid shapes made up of wood stalks and twisting vines. Red-aligned elementals are fiery beasts or spirits that haunt places like the Ashmouth or Devil's Reach. The malignus that destroyed Estwald (in Gavony's Nearheath) is a fiery elemental spirit said to still lurk in the area. Black-aligned elementals are animated grafs, massed assemblages of corpses and gravestones assembled in a coherent form.

The green-aligned avatar called Essence of the Wild is a malevolent nature spirit that has been known to take humans that wander too far into the wilds and imprison them in some remote domain or alternate dimension. And the black-aligned avatar called the Soul of Innistrad is a manifestation of the life of the plane—and its grim obsession with death.

Malignus ➤ Jung Park



Provinces of Innistrad





Foul Orchard ➤ Jung Park

Gavony

The great, gleaming city of Thraben stands like a bulwark against the encroaching darkness. The largest city in Innistrad, it represents the undying hope of humanity and embodies the church's promise of protection from the world's evil. Scattered across rocky moors and rolling hills around the High City are a handful of small towns and farms, some having little more than shuttered windows, barred doors, and grim determination to stand between their terrified populace and the horrors of the night.

The madness of Avacyn has taken root at the heart of the High City, the bastion of hope in the darkness.

Thraben is the seat of Avacyn's church, once a monument to the angelic protectors of humanity, now transformed into a symbol of terror. As crazed angels soar on bloodstained wings, the inquisitors of the church ride out from Thraben to mete out a twisted justice on an innocent population. The horrors of the night are as active as they were during Avacyn's absence, since angels and inquisitors alike seem more interested in rooting out sin from the human population than they are in hunting monsters.

Hope has not completely fled from Gavony. Though few dare to question the decrees of the inquisitors, some cathars still seek to protect the people—even if that means shielding them from the church itself. The town of Hanweir has declared its independence from the church's rule and fortified its walls, standing against the angels' madness as well as the geists and zombies that haunt the countryside. And a few fearless individuals have declared themselves angel slayers, practicing combat techniques that help them vanquish even these powerful foes.

Church and state in Gavony are one, and the province is divided into five parishes for administrative purposes. Each parish has its own main church in addition to numerous chapels and altars. The city of Thraben stands as a parish on its own. Three make up the region called the Nearheath: Videns, Wittal, and Effalen. The fifth parish is the Moorland, larger than the other four combined.





Humble the Brute ☙ Daarken



Abbey Griffin ☛ Jaime Jones

"Mix the mortar with holy wards, or blood will run in the streets." —*Vadvar, Thraben stonewright*

Thraben, the High City

Situated on a large island at one end of the Lake of Herons and shielded by high stone walls, Thraben is a gleaming light in the midst of darkness and terror. At least, it was before Avacyn's madness. Now the cathedral is a fortress guarded by angel sentries wheeling about Avacyn's Tower, the spire where the archangel herself dwells. The church's leaders seem as mad as the angels, launching an inquisition meant to root out whatever sin is arousing the angels' wrath. The bloodstained city walls where werewolves and vampires were once chained and killed now host grisly executions of innocent humans, and the fortified outer wall of the city serves as much to keep its citizens inside as to keep other dangers out.

The walls of Thraben mark the city's growth like the rings in a tree trunk, and divide the city into sections. Even old walls that have crumbled to ruin still mark the boundaries between districts of the city. Some of the walls also serve ceremonial functions—mostly connected to punishing the wicked.

OUTER WALL. The main defense of Thraben is a thick, high wall ringing the perimeter of the city.

MERCHANT'S WALL. This wide wall contains many large chambers used as specialized markets. The wall encircles the large market square that is the center of commerce in Thraben.

CHILD'S WALL. The wall surrounding the grounds of the cathedral is nearly as strong and tall as the outer wall. When a child is born anywhere in Gavony, parents make a pilgrimage to Thraben within the first year of the child's life and inscribe the child's name on this wall, in hopes of securing Avacyn's protective blessings on the child.

FANG WALL. Captured werewolves are executed in front of this wall, and their fangs are ripped out and shoved into the crevices between its stones.

BLOODLESS WALL. Captured vampires are bound in manacles attached to this wall and left to starve.

Thraben has entire city blocks devoted to burial sites, called blessed grafs. Mausoleums and tombs stand in ordered grids among well-tended trees and blooming flowers. Cathar soldiers keep constant watch over the tombs to keep grave robbers and necromancers out—and zombies in. Much like parks, these blessed grafs offer a place for citizens to find some measure of peace and rest among the dead who are enjoying the Blessed Sleep.

Warden of the Wall ➢ Daniel Ljunggren



Clifftop Retreat ➢ John Avon

Cathedral of Avacyn

The spiritual center of Innistrad is Thraben's towering cathedral, home of Avacyn's church and, indeed, the archangel herself. The cathedral stands perched on a sheer cliff, with the waters of the Lake of Herons rushing around it before plummeting down to the sea in ribbons of water and great sprays of mist. The towers of the cathedral itself rise almost as high above the city as the churning sea lies below. Shining angels wheel around the highest spires—once symbols of Avacyn's protection, now objects of terror in their madness. All the power of the church is concentrated in this enormous building, like a sun whose glaring light spreads over all the lands around.

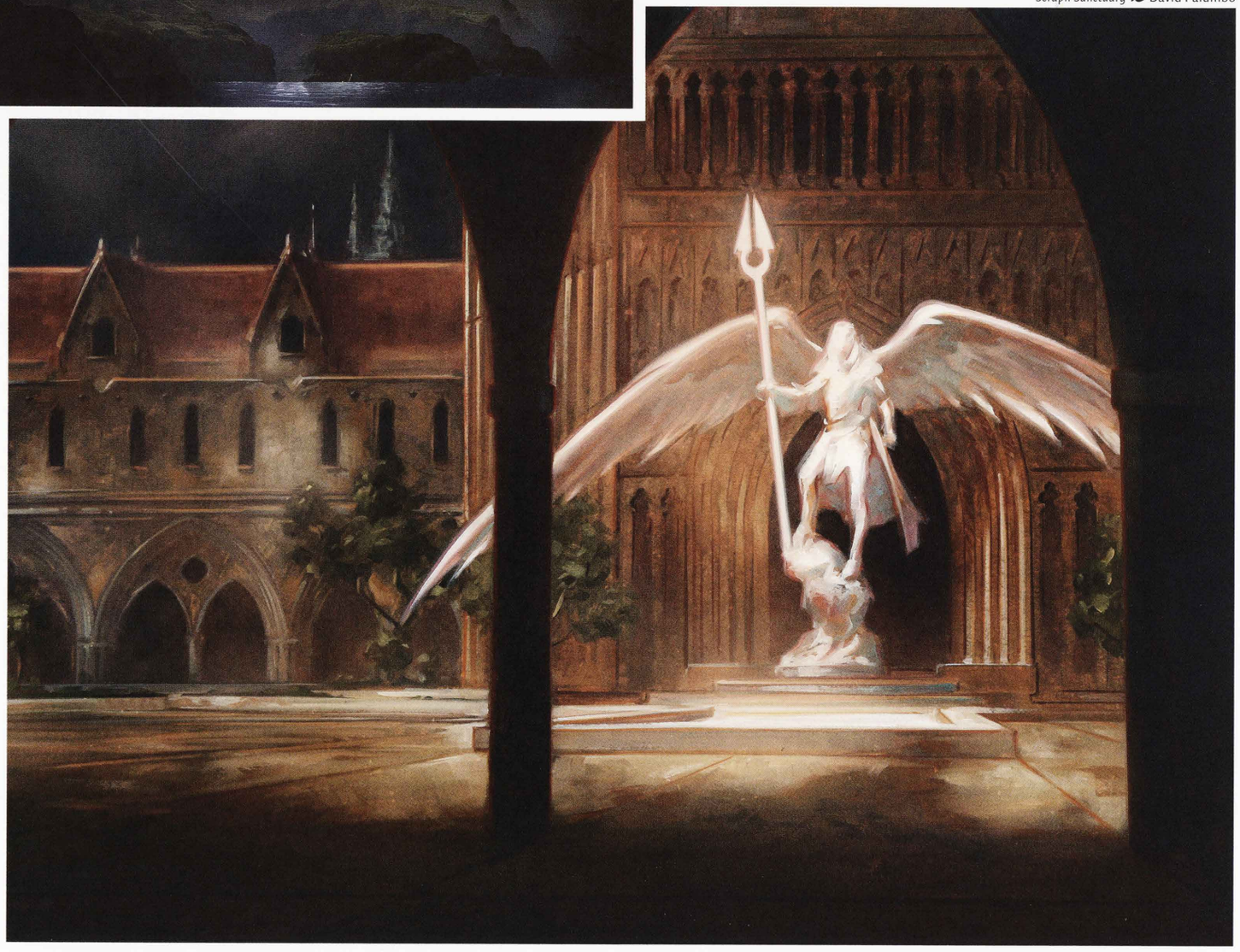
The cathedral has a forked shape reminiscent of Avacyn's spear, with two wings forming a triangular courtyard just above the Kirch Falls. At the end of a stone promontory, a blackened circle marks the former location of the Helvault, the prison in which Avacyn and countless demons were imprisoned over the course of many centuries. The courtyard is still holy ground, and only members of the Lunarch Council are allowed inside. The courtyard was once a lush garden maintained by trusted groundskeepers, but the opening of the Helvault left it a barren and lifeless place where nothing will grow.

The cathedral was never a place for daily worship, except by the clergy and cathars who live on the grounds. Each district of the city has its own parish church for everyday functions. In these days of the

Moorland Haunt ➢ James Paick



Seraph Sanctuary ➢ David Palumbo







Before the opening of the Helvault, the so-called Tree of Redemption in the cathedral courtyard was used to execute clergy members of the Skirsdag.

Tree of Redemption ☛ Vincent Proce

angels' madness, the doors remain closed even on the high holy days, when they used to stand open. Both the opulent Chapel of Noble Peers where the upper classes worshipped and the larger Midvast Hall (with its covered cloisters, where commoners stood during worship) are now vacant.

The Lofts. At the top of a lofty tower in the center of the cathedral is Avacyn's Loft, the holy site where the angels dwell. A rickety staircase winds hundreds of feet to a cavernous hall with vaulted ceilings, where no human has set foot in centuries. Called the Lofts, this hall is home to Avacyn's angels—and in a smaller hall just above it dwells Avacyn herself. With the angels' madness, the Lofts have deteriorated even more than they did during Avacyn's absence, and Avacyn's loft is now open to the glowering sky.

Fal Seminary. Located on the cathedral grounds but separate from the building itself, Fal Seminary is the most prominent school for training members of the clergy. Most wealthy families send at least one child (often the second or third in line to be head of the household) to study at the seminary.





Intangible Virtue Clint Cearley



Hanweir Watchkeep ➢ Wayne Reynolds

Nearheath

The fertile, rolling hills within a few miles of Thraben are called the Nearheath, and the scattered towns and villages in this area account for most of Gavony's population. Several of its towns are protected by stone walls, and even the larger villages have managed to erect wooden palisades to provide some measure of protection against the night. Smaller hamlets and isolated farmhouses, though, must rely on the faith and bravery of their inhabitants—or the desperate hope that the monsters of the wilds will simply overlook them.

An additional measure of protection is provided by the cathars and soldiers that patrol the Nearheath. Cathar parish-blades patrol the crossways and guard roadside chapels, and Thraben used to send inquisitors to the Nearheath whenever reports of vampire or werewolf activity grew serious and desperate enough. Given Avacyn's madness and the church's response to it, though, inquisitors are too busy hunting down the "sinplagued" to give much attention to unsubstantiated rumors of monsters.

The Nearheath comprises three parishes: Videns, Wittal, and Effalen.

Videns Parish. Nourished by the wide, fast waters of the River Kirch, the fertile land of Videns parish supports a number of vineyards and orchards. Most of the croplands are hemmed in by old stone walls, each estate dominated by a small keep or fortified manor house.

In this rural parish, the largest settlement is the town of Hanweir, the agricultural jewel of Gavony. It once boasted a bustling open-air market where crops and livestock from across Gavony were bought and sold, and trappers from Kessig brought their wares as well. With the madness of the angels, the people of Hanweir have declared themselves a sovereign province and shut their gates to the outside world. Their watchkeeps, stationed atop the town walls, use giant crossbows to keep outside threats far from the town.

Wittal Parish. Ancient pines tower over most of Wittal parish, clustered so close as to block the sun. Only where residents of the province have felled the great trees does sunlight reach the ground, resulting in a riot of undergrowth instead of the blanket of dry needles that covers most of the parish. Small villages, surrounded with strong palisades, dot the parish. Teams of lumberjacks never venture too far from the relative safety of the village walls and always return by nightfall, though werewolves have not been seen in the forest since Avacyn's return. Woodcarvers, coopers, and cabinetmakers work the pinewood and send their products to Hanweir and Thraben.

The town of Estwald was once the largest settlement in Wittal parish, but it lies in ash and ruin now. During Avacyn's absence, the town was all but obliterated by an enormous elemental spirit of fire and lightning called a malignus. With Avacyn's madness, the struggling survivors of Estwald were among the first to bear the brunt of the angels' wrath, and the town is now nothing more than a scar on the face of the earth, its people scattered.

Effalen Parish. The rocky, windswept heath of Effalen parish is dominated by low shrubs and jagged outcrops. A few scattered villages, mostly located near large rock quarries, are the only human habitations in the parish. Vampires once haunted Effalen as well, but with the return of Avacyn they were forced into Stensia.

"It descended on Estwald like a sudden storm. Moments later, only ashes and agony remained." —Rem Karolus



Gather the Townsfolk ◣ Dan Scott

Moorlands

Beyond the Nearheath, the rest of Gavony is mostly desolate moors, littered with boulders and draped in perpetual mist. Few trees rise above the grasses and shrubs that cover the land. Spectral wolves, wandering geists, and the monstrous creations of necromancers like Gisa and Geralf make the Moorlands far more dangerous than most of Gavony. Villages are few and far between, so although the area of the Moorlands is much larger than the other four parishes combined, its population is the lowest of the parishes.

The village of Merwald Downs is notable only for the proximity of Rider's Lock, a walled compound that hosts the Gavony Riders. This elite cavalry is trained in mounted combat using swords and lances.

There are more abandoned villages in the Moorlands than inhabited ones. Trostad used to be a village of trappers on the border with Kessig, but it was entirely overrun by Geralf's undead creations when he and his sister marched to Thraben. It is now Geralf's base of operations, with Gisa conspicuously absent.

Westvale Road runs from Bower Passage at the Kessig border, passing through Trostad on the way.

The Seekers of Westvale. These secretive cultists in the Moorlands are representative of the Gavony cults in general. Led by a man named Helvig, the members of the cult gather at cryptoliths on the nearby moors. They sow seeds of discord in their little village, deflecting suspicion from themselves by accusing others of sinning. They have no qualms about murdering anyone who gets too close to uncovering their secrets. Their twisted practices are warping their sanity and even their flesh, transforming them into something that is not quite human.

Similar cults operate in villages across Gavony. They have no connection with each other except for their founding by Nahiri. Some of them have taken to cutting enormous sigils in the croplands (particularly in Videns parish) in imitation of the twisted stones. Though these serve no actual function, the cults believe that they drive the angels to madness. Given that multiple isolated cults are engaging in this activity, it must spring from some common influence working its way into their minds.

Riders of Gavony ➤ Volkan Baga





Helvig's Exhortations

Blessings rain down upon us, and stone hands rise from the earth and point us to the one who is coming. The trials of the past pave the way for the exoneration that awaits us. The angels have cleansed us, and already we are changed, we are transformed into perfection. Shrink not from the touch of the one who is coming, for what is hideous in the eyes of this world is perfect in the world to come.

Behind the moon and beyond the stars is the one who is coming, but closer and closer draws the time of the coming. Hands reach toward us, drawing us on and up, bidding us offer welcome. Prepare the table, keep alert in the night, wait and watch, for the one who is coming will come in an instant without warning, and we must be ready.

Cherish the blessings of the one who is coming, and purge the wicked from the villages and farms. If wickedness hides in your neighbor's house—no, even in your own house—you must cut it off like a festering wound. Do not let it flourish, or you will be abandoned when the time of the coming is here.

Wayward Disciple ➤ Kev Walker

Plains ➤ Jung Park

Kessig

Before humans ventured into the wild wood, before their squash farms and apple orchards displaced the ancient trees, before the silver of Avacyn and the prayers of the priests brought light under the forest eaves, the Ulvenwald was a dense, majestic forest towering over low, leaf-papered hills. Even then, ghostly spirits and howling wolves stalked amid the trees, and werewolves fled from the towns and villages of Gavony's moors into the sheltering wood. But then humans moved into the area and named it Kessig, felling trees and planting crops and praying to the angels to keep the evils of the forest at bay. Despite their efforts over the course of a century, the claws of the forest still hold the tiny human villages in their grip.

The wooded countryside, where the wolves howl by night, is a gloomy, moon-chilled wilderness.

Kessig has been largely unaffected by the fluctuating fortunes of Innistrad over the past hundred years. Even before Avacyn's disappearance, the reach of her priests and cathars only extended so far, and Kessigers have long relied on folk charms and superstitions to protect them from the evils of the forest. Avacyn's return strengthened the wards and blessings, but it did not eliminate the horrors of the Ulvenwald. And now Avacyn's madness is, by and large, a problem of more settled lands. However, rumors of unthinkable horrors in the neighboring provinces have begun to take hold in Kessig, suggesting troubled times ahead.

For the Kessiger, life is work. Kessigers are farmers, millers, weavers, and stonemasons; they are close to the land and must work hard for every meal. This makes them self-reliant, pragmatic, and plainspoken. Kessigers don't purchase tools from the general store; they forge their tools themselves. They don't learn arithmetic or memorize the names of important Lunarchs or prominent families; they learn harvest dates and the shapes of edible weeds. They don't quote great works of literature; they call it like they see it, in their own plain words.



Creeping Dread ◆ Anthony Palumbo



Ulvenwald, the Impossible Wood

Woods of aspen, birch, and maple border the edges of Kessig province—the ancient Ulvenwald. Mile after mile of its great expanse remains untrodden by human feet, and even where farmland and orchard groves have been carved out of the forest, its trees loom nearby, a constant, silent presence.

The Ulvenwald has always been a strange place, but lately it seems to defy the laws of nature—even the normal rules of space and time. More and more people disappear on the roads and trails through the Ulvenwald, and travelers sometimes stumble out of the forest with no idea of where they are or how long they have been gone.

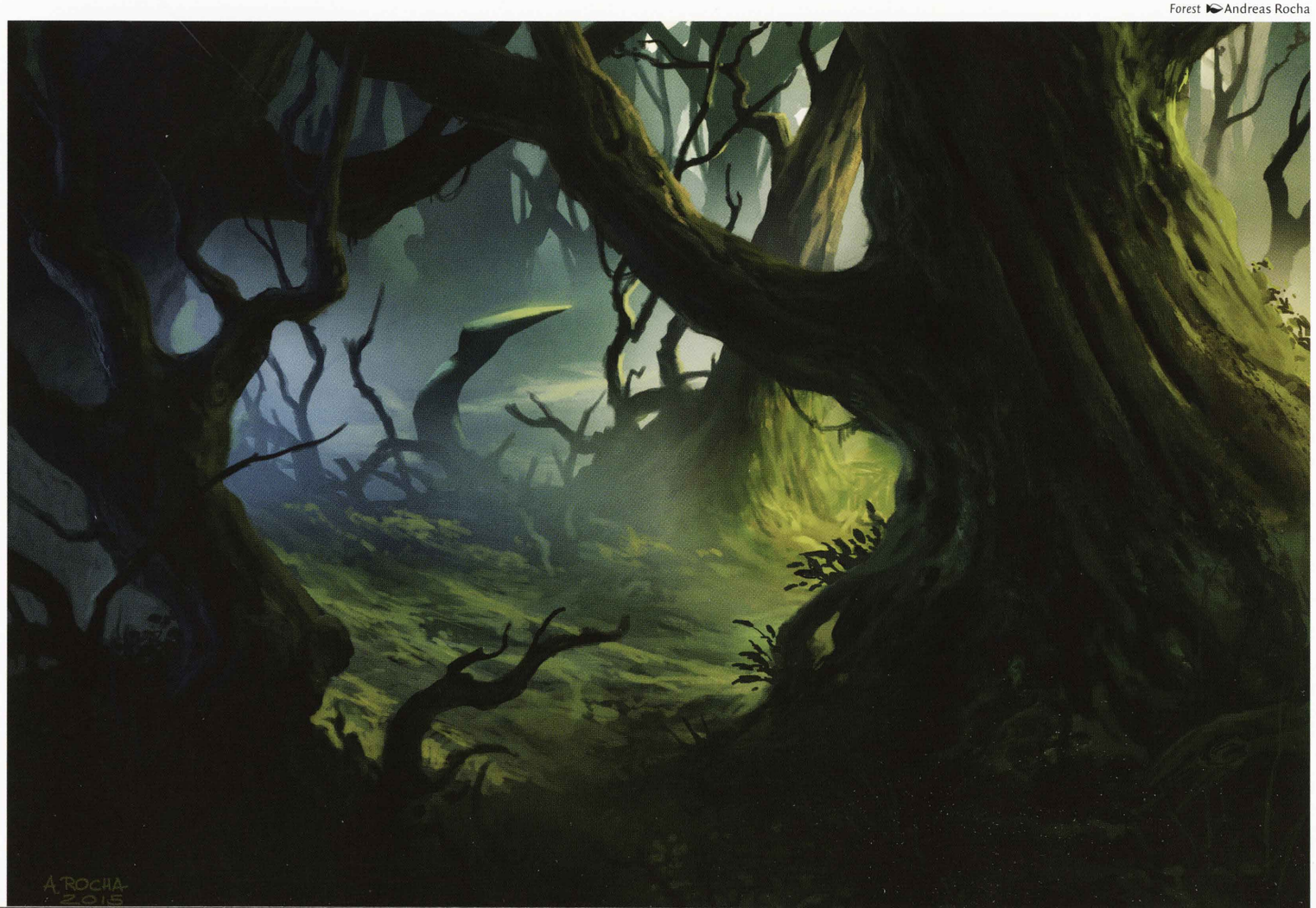
The trees of the Ulvenwald have broad leaves in muted reds, golds, and greens, and the forest floor is carpeted in damp leaves. At night, the autumnal colors of the forest turn stark and steely under the silver glow of the moon, and howls come from every direction, sometimes sounding impossibly close. Nonsensical paths twist and double back through the Ulvenwald's hanging mist, dead-ending in impenetrable thickets or delivering travelers to unpredictable locations. Meanwhile, werewolves, wild and primordial spirits, and other lurking fiends seem to have no trouble navigating the wood, and frequently attack those journeying into Kessig from other provinces.

In particular, the werewolves of the Vildin howlpack seem most adept at navigating the transformed Ulvenwald, despite their relatively recent appearance in Kessig. They enjoy stalking the unfortunate humans who get lost in the mazelike depths of the forest, drawing as much pleasure from the terror of their prey as they do from the kill itself.

Among the few lights in the perpetual twilight of the wood is Alena, a trapper who knows the paths of the Ulvenwald perhaps better than anyone. Alena has fought all the beasts of the Ulvenwald, from wolves and werewolves to sentient plants and horrific skaabs. Now she travels the wood with her partner Halana and a handful of other rangers, aiding travelers who have gotten lost in the eldritch wood.

"The wolves turned on us and a chill swept over me. The pack had a new leader."
—Alena, *trapper of Kessig*

Forest ➽ Andreas Rocha





Flayer of the Hatebound ➪ Jana Schirmer & Johannes Voss



Sulfur Falls ➪ Cliff Childs

Devils' Breach

Far from the towns, off the wagon-beaten paths, through vaults of primeval forest, a cave mouth known as Devils' Breach yawns open in the tall, rocky hills. Smoke and heat waft from the cave, obscuring its depths, and eerie voices mutter and cackle. Travelers have reported that the cave has grown wider since the opening of the Helvault, and that gangs of devils burst from its depths nightly. Lately the devils have been building strange, twisting, torchlit paths through the woods—paths that bear a resemblance to the crop circles and twisted stone henges in Gavony's Moorlands.

Inquisitor Verena, a cathar originally from Avabruck, returned to Kessig after her training in Nephalia to help protect her people from werewolves and other threats. She arrived at the head of a whole troop of cathar soldiers, but quickly found that she had her work cut out for her. She and her soldiers battled werewolves, geists, and the occasional ghoulcaller or skaberen, and also had to contend with the mistrust of the people she was there to protect. As the enemies of humanity grew stronger in Avacyn's absence, the people found it easier to focus on the cathars' failures than on their limited successes. With the launch of the Lunarch Inquisition, Verena's troop returned to Gavony, but Verena disobeyed the orders of her superiors and remained in Kessig. Now she has established a camp near Devil's Breach, with patrols of volunteer warriors and rangers helping her to track and kill the devils that spill out from the cave.



Shimmering Grotto ➤ Cliff Childs

The Natterknolls, the Murmuring Highlands

The highest points of Kessig are rocky ridges and cliffs that flank the wooded valleys of the province. Werewolves range here as well, but lately the Natterknolls have been gaining new tenants: gibbering hermits and backwoods witches. Several Kessig villagers have fled their homes to dwell in shacks and woodland lean-tos among the gentle crests of the Natterknolls, and it's said that their nonsensical tirades echo through the valleys each night.

During Avacyn's absence, Eruth—a young woman of Lambholt—gained notoriety for her clairvoyant dreams. With the arrival of Emrakul, Eruth seems to have crossed over into utter madness. She has moved out of Lambholt to the Natterknolls, and her waking hours are a constant stream of incoherent babble, fueled by the horrors of her nightmares. Once in a while, in the midst of the nonsense, she pronounces chilling words that foretell a great coming doom—and then, as if unaware of the message she delivered, she continues her senseless raving.

Eruth grew up in Lambholt frail and restless, never comfortable, always on edge. Her nightmares began in her youth, slowly becoming more frequent until they wore away at her sanity. Every night, she dreamed that she was a different person, usually someone unknown to her. Every dream ended with that person about to die violently, but she always awoke before the moment of death. And every dream corresponded with an actual death. Some dreams took place before the death, but others were after or even at the exact moment of death. Cathar investigators often tried grilling her for information that might help them solve a murder case or identify a vampire or werewolf moving among humanity, but they found her information very difficult to act upon. Now her ravings are no less challenging to interpret, but to those who will listen they seem to indicate a horrible future for Innistrad.

Gatstaf, Parish on the Canyon

The village of Gatstaf is on the lip of a deep crevasse, surrounded by rocky wheat fields and shot through with chasms and caverns. Gatstaf is well-known for its thorny but hearty grains, its coal mining, and its skilled leatherworkers. Residents of Gatstaf are pious but belligerent, and have been known to assemble mobs to attack homes or families believed to harbor werewolves, led by the town elder Kolman. Gatstaf is also known for a nearby religious landmark: a crossway runs down from Gatstaf through the canyon below to Gatstaf Grotto, where a famous natural spring and Avacynian altar are situated.

Lambholt, the Threatened Pasture

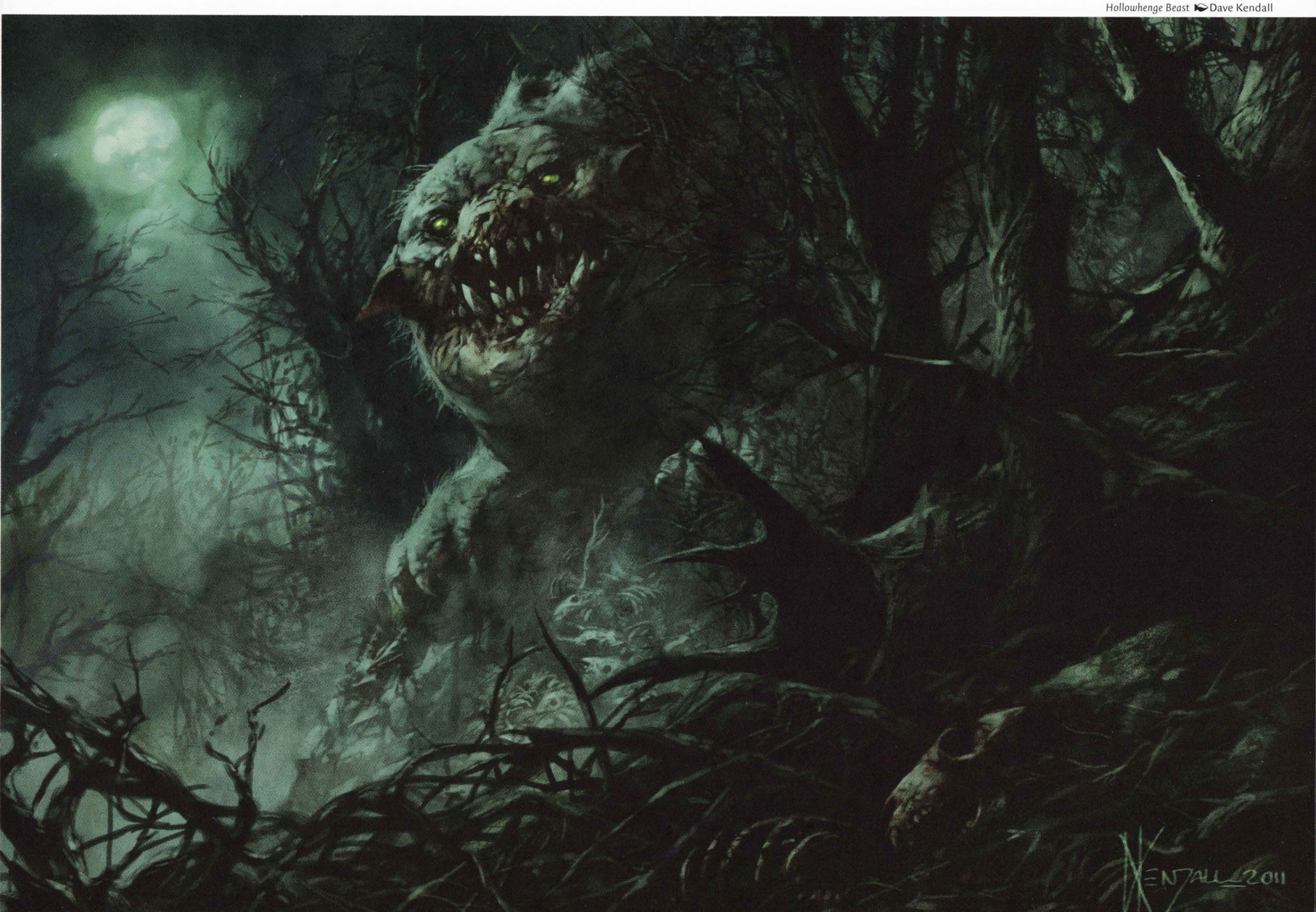
Lambholt is a farming village at the center of miles of sheep, goat, and cattle pasture. The pastures near the town were once mingled with woods—dense arms of forest that once joined the Ulvenwald—but the Kessigers here chopped down all but a few trees to clear room for their farms. It's thought that wild essences resent the destruction of their forests, for werewolves continually terrorize the livestock and humans of Lambholt. The villagers of Lambholt once celebrated a harvest festival, but that tradition has been supplanted by a monthly hunter's contest. Villagers and champions carve trails through the surrounding Ulvenwald, seeking a pelt or trophy from the most powerful supernatural creature they can find. Many never return.

Hollowhenge, the Lost Capital

A ruin of wood and brick now squats where Kessig's county seat stood, near the crossroads of two major Kessig thoroughfares. A few years ago it was a thriving small town of manor houses called Avabruck, but the now-dispersed Mondronen howlpack tore through the town and laid siege to the cathedral. The town was abandoned, leaving only a circular "henge" of buildings around the devastation within. Now only wild, terrified geists and werewolf scavengers dwell among the ruins, but travelers can still find wooden signs among the splintered wood and broken gates that say "Avabruck" in cheerfully colored paint.

"Who says werewolves are the only ones who can hunt as a pack?" —Kolman, *elder of Gatstaf*

Hollowhenge Beast ➪ Dave Kendall







Cult of the Waxing Moon ➤ Anastasia Ovchinnikova

The Breakneck Ride

Only a few paths lead into Kessig from the other provinces. Each crossway is fraught with peril, leading travelers through the Ulvenwald and over treacherous slopes, so those who make the journey do so at as brisk a pace as possible. Kessigers sometimes collectively refer to these paths as the "Breakneck Ride."

Hairpin Road. One path into Kessig winds down from Getander Pass in the cloud-ringed Stensian mountains and around bat-plagued precipices. The road switches back over and over again, climbing and declining, always keeping the rider or carriage dangerously close to a sheer drop. Falkenrath vampires keep a careful eye on this road, as they haunt the pass above it.

Bower Passage. Another path takes the traveler from Gavony straight through the heart of Ulvenwald, the werewolf-infested forest. This dirt road follows a twisting path through tree branches that arch overhead like the ceiling of a cathedral. In the daytime the sun streaming through the cathedral trees can be quite beautiful—but it's still foolish to be stingy with the whip. Dryads and nature spirits are said to haunt the Passage, and werewolves can track horses by scent.

Briarbridge. The final main thoroughfare into Kessig comes from Nephalia through the rolling, autumnal hills that surround many of Kessig's farm communities. A thicket of thistles and tall, thorny grains flanks the road. Where the road intersects a sleepy river, the path crosses over a covered wooden bridge. The bridge is a sturdy way across the river, but it is also a dark place prone to ambushes, and one of the only routes by which a vampire can cross into Kessig while the moon glistens on the water.

Corpse Traders ➪ Kev Walker





Forest ☙ Jonas de Ro

"Innocent thorns can fill the air with your bloodscent. Don't stray from the path."
—Elmut, *crossway watcher*

Old Rutstein. Known as a purveyor of finest goods, Old Rutstein drives a carriage full of his wares around Kessig and the surrounding lands. Although he travels alone, he is well protected: holy symbols and charms bedeck his carriage and his person, wards are inscribed on every surface of his crates and chests, and a huge silver heron symbol (which he says he "found" near the bell tower of an old Avacynian cathedral) is strapped to the carriage roof. Rutstein often carries contraband goods, including human blood and body parts. Some believe he is a pawn of vampire scheming; others have heard that geists follow him wherever he goes; still others say he is an alchemist who knows more magic than he lets on. One thing is certain: he never gets lost in the woods.



Diregraf Escort ▸ Ryan Pancoast





Ulvenwald Mystics ◆ Dan Scott

Peasant Magic

Kessig is peopled with hardworking commoners, and they use a variety of simple magic in their daily lives.

Prayer. Simple, practical Avacynian magic is in common use in Kessig. It's used to ward off evil beings, protect buildings and crops, and bless weapons. Priests wield the magic of Avacyn to the greatest effect, but even commoners know a few potent prayers.

Death Rites. Death is a crucially important phase of life on Innistrad, and great precautions are taken to encourage the deceased to enter the Blessed Sleep. Funeral rites vary, but often include a ritual to sanctify the resting place, songs to ward off geists, the construction of wreaths of living wood, and the placing of a large stone grave marker in the shape of the silver collar of Avacyn.

Hunter's Fire. The woods around Kessig are dangerous. Some who venture out to hunt evil can call upon mystic fire to punish the wicked who cross their paths, or to help their bows and crossbows hit their mark.

Siege Defenses. A few manor houses in Kessig have magical defenses that can be "set off" when the home is under attack. Walls of geistflame spring up, torches flare to life to brighten the night, and signal flares shoot into the sky to call for the help of remote cathars.

Silvercraft. Some craftspeople can do more than forge silver—they can actually use silver in offensive magic that strikes down evil beings.

The Town Bell. Even in poorly defended farm villages (which describes most communities in Kessig), the traditional bell in the town square is sounded whenever there is trouble. The bell does more than just alert the villagers of danger; it also rallies and inspires fearful hearts.

Curses. Old communities remember old oaths. Some Kessigers practice hidden folk magic that twists words into powerful curses. Those afflicted with curses need to seek the help of priests—or destroy the one who cursed them.

Farm Magic. Kessig's long, gloomy autumn season is often unkind to crops, so Kessigers use charms to encourage growth, keep away pests, and remedy blight. This kind of magic can also serve to grow thick, woody briars and brambles that can slow down ghouls and discourage vampires.

Blood Rituals. Most of the blood magic that happens in Kessig is known only by rumor, assumed to be performed by werewolves and other perverse creatures. But some Kessigers know a few blood oaths that can bind people into unbreakable contracts, encourage powerful subconscious emotions to bubble up to the surface, or summon dark forces from the depths of the earth. These types of magic are always considered wicked and are usually illegal, and require fresh blood or even animal sacrifice for the magic to take hold.



Ulvenwald Mysteries ➤ Greg Opalinski

After the Cursemute

The people of Kessig place more faith in Avacyn than in her church. Many of them call Thraben an "angel's prison" (referring to the Helvault) overseen by "lying clerics," and the Lunarch Inquisition has solidified that resistance to church authority. Kessigers rely on their folk charms and superstitions, not the elaborate rites of the church.

Avacyn and the Cursemute. The return of Avacyn was cause for celebration in Kessig. Wards and blessings have regained their effectiveness. Werewolves seemingly disappeared thanks to the cursemute, Avacyn's spell that turned a group of lycanthropes into the unchanging, noble wolfir. Some praised the wolfir as protectors of Kessig, and a welcome change for the dangerous paths and trails through the woods. But paranoia has always been a practical strategy in Kessig, and many regarded the wolfir as just another woodland beast to be feared and warded against. And now the cursemute may have been overturned.

Cursemute's End. The squash-bread feasts and wreath-hanging festivals celebrating Avacyn's return have been short-lived. Kessigers' worst fear has come true: werewolves have begun their attacks again. Villagers have resumed their periodic wolf hunts into the woods, and every neighbor's disappearance has been blamed on werewolf attacks—or on the neighbor being one of the shapechangers. The etiquette of wearing blessed silver prominently on one's person barely had a chance to go out of style. It's assumed that the magic of the cursemute has ended, or that its influence is waning, and that Kessig is afflicted by werewolves once again.

Wavering Faith. Even more serious, rumors have spread of changes in Avacyn's bearing and appearance. Recently a Kessiger family was found dead along the Bower Passage of the Ulvenwald, and it's said that they died not among the roars of werewolves, but among the shrieking songs of angels. Tales of angelic attacks in the other provinces have made their way to Kessig, further splintering the already suspicious rural folk into factions. The thought that angels would do anything other than protect good folk is shocking talk in the villages of Kessig, and many still cling to their silver Avacyn's Collar pendants and folk hymns. But pitchforks and torches are kept close at hand.

Etiquette in a World of Supernaturals. Superstition and fear of supernatural creatures have woven their way into etiquette in Kessig. When you meet someone for the first time, it's polite to show that you are wearing an item made from silver (even though silver can easily be counterfeited, and only blessed silver has real protective power). Wreaths of living wood are commonly given as gifts, and are often placed on the door of a home where a child has just been born, a gesture meant to protect the child's life from vampires (even though the wood dies and its effectiveness wanes after a few days). It's customary to eat sour-root soup before traveling, or to fast for up to a day before a long trip, which is thought to make one less appealing to werewolves or other hungry beasts.

The Sleep Revel. It's traditional in Kessig to celebrate a person on the anniversary of his or her death, a joyous ceremony called the Sleep Revel—as long as the deceased has successfully stayed in the ground that long (instead of reemerging as a ghoul, geist, or other supernatural fiend). The continued undisturbed sleep of one's ancestors is seen as almost a greater blessing than the continuing birthdays of one's living relatives.

Clip Wings ☚Howard Lyon



Nephalia

Beneath an ever-present shroud of fog billowing in from the sea, the people of Nephalia maintain a semblance of normalcy, buying and selling goods from across Innistrad in their bustling markets, setting out to sea in tiny fishing boats, or tilling the soggy earth in waterlogged fields. The three major port towns—Havengul, Drunau, and Selhoff—are the center of commerce in Innistrad, buying goods from the other provinces, trading them among themselves, and shipping them out to the provinces again.

Madness holds the fog-choked coast in its grasp, fueling the obsession of necromancers, mad scientists, and crazed cultists.

All the evil and madness of Innistrad seems unable to halt the gears of commerce in Nephalia, but business has certainly slowed. Caravans that used to come weekly from the other provinces now come every month or not at all. Villagers who flock to the market squares go missing in the fog, falling prey to necromancers, skaberen, or blood-crazed cultists. Horrible monsters rise from the churning ocean waters to devour fishing vessels and their crews. Restless spirits, racked with madness, howl through the fog and drive farmers from their fields. And now even Avacyn's church seems to have turned against the people of Nephalia, dragging away those who are accused of giving offense to the angels and executing them in the blood-soaked Elgaud Grounds. And somehow, despite all this, the Nephalians perform their daily routines, pantomiming a normal life.

To mention the horrors of the night and the terrors of the perpetual fog is an affront to polite society, as if giving voice to these fears bestows power on them. But hidden in basements or abandoned warehouses, or sheltering amid twisted cryptoliths on rocky bluffs overlooking the churning sea, the twisted and the depraved dare not only to speak of these horrors, but to invoke them. They offer sacrifices to the monsters of the seas and lakes, harvest the energy of fog-dwelling spirits, or create new life from the bodies of the slain. And they point fingers at their innocent neighbors when a Lunarch Inquisitor comes near, deflecting suspicion away from their own activities.





Engulf the Shore Cliff Childs

Province by the Sea

Nephalia is defined by water. Its long coastline, though it has its share of bluffs and rocky promontories, offers easy access to the ocean, which accounts for the prosperity of its three major port towns. The abundant rainfall and natural springs in the highlands give rise to burbling creeks and rushing streams that flow together to form the three great, navigable rivers of Nephalia. Lakes and marshes form wherever the flow of water is slowed or halted. Its rocky ground, largely cleared of forest, is cut into canyons and caves by the constant flow of rivers and the crashing of the ocean waves. And the persistent shroud of fog—called the Nebelgast, or "Breath of the Sleepless"—leaves everything along the coast covered in a constant film of chill moisture.

Though many smaller villages dot the ocean coast, riverbanks, and lake shores, the three port towns are home to the majority of Nephalia's population.



Nephalia Drownyard ➤ Cliff Childs



Stromkirk Captain ➽ Jana Schirmer & Johannes Voss

Havengul and the Silburlind

Havengul stands at the mouth of the Silburlind River, which has its source in the moorlands of Gavony. Its population, the largest of the three port towns, consists of human woodworkers, shipbuilders, smiths, and traders. The Avacynian church has always had a strong presence here, claiming its share of the bustling trade, but with the launch of the Lunarch Inquisition, most of the clergy remain secure behind the walls of the Elgaud Grounds unless they are out gathering up the "sinplagued" for trial and hasty execution.

The Lord Mayor of Havengul is Herzag, a corrupt merchant who allows the illicit underground to flourish for his own personal gain. Besides the more mundane criminal trades, grave robbers carry out a busy trade in corpses here, which they sell to ghoulcallers and skaberen alike.

Drunau and the Alrun

The Alrun river starts in the highland forests where the Ulvenwald of Kessig abuts Gavony's Moorlands, and cuts a canyon through rocky ground until it reaches the sea at Drunau. Drunau is nestled in the canyon at the river's mouth, with high bluffs overlooking it from both sides. The artisans of Drunau include renowned weaponsmiths and sculptors, and its markets support a bustling trade in blessed items from Thraben. The vampires of the Stromkirk line call the region around Drunau home, and frequently walk the town's streets at night.

The mayor of Drunau is Elder Vetters, a human servant of Runo Stromkirk who stays out of the vampires' business in exchange for the promise of immortality. Under his watch, human blood has become a commodity that is bought and sold under the barest pretense of secrecy.

"No longer can we allow our human populations to be mindlessly slaughtered by ghouls. Slay all who trespass." —Runo Stromkirk

Stromkirk Keep. High on a cliff overlooking Drunau sits Stromkirk Keep, guarded by horrors that never sleep. Within its walls, Runo's small army lives and trains, making sure that nearby Stromkirk Manor—the ancestral manor of the Stromkirk vampire line and home of the line's founder, Runo Stromkirk—is kept free of prying eyes and angry mobs.



Sturmgeist ➢ Terese Nielsen



Binding geists into armor has given the necro-alchemist Dierk the power of flight.

Spectral Flight ➢ Johann Bodin

Selhoff and the Ospid

The Ospid flows through the lowlands of Nephalia and forms a small delta where it empties into the Bay of Vustrow. On the fertile ground of the delta stands the foggy, quiet port of Selhoff, where the Nebelgast is thickest and most active. The wealthiest merchants of the town live in distinctive towers and spires unlike anything seen in the other towns of Innistrad, leading to the use of the phrase "the spires of Selhoff" to mean the town as a whole. These wealthy merchants form a council that governs the town under the leadership of Councillor Lira Kurash.

Necro-Alchemists in Selhoff. Necro-alchemists flock to Selhoff because of its tall towers and spires, where they affix eldritch machines to harness the energy of the wind and storms. These scientists also harvest geists from the Nebelgast for use in their research and as a fuel source for their mad experiments. The most lunatic of these scientists are dissatisfied with "stale" geists that have been long dead, and actually strap unwilling living subjects into their machines, directly harvesting the "fresh" spirit as the victim dies. Among the crazed scientists of Selhoff are Hadaken, who uses geist-fueled engines to animate skaabs and bestow the power of flight to their stitched bodies; and Dierk, whose experiments with binding geists into armor have made him a target for the Lunarch Inquisition.

The Nebelgast. The so-called "Breath of the Sleepless" lingers along the entire coast of Nephalia. In Selhoff, it no longer recedes with the tide as it once did, leaving the town draped in a perpetual mist. The moans and wails of geists are audible in the distance at all times of day, almost like distant thunder. The spirits are also far more active than in the past: they shake or move or even destroy furniture and other objects, and sometimes even hurl objects with deadly force.

Morkrut. The river delta around Selhoff is a waterlogged marsh called Morkrut. Few dare to venture into Morkrut (sometimes called *the* Morkrut), for its fog-draped expanse is a hiding place for all manner of monsters, from vampires to banshees and other malevolent geists. Morkrut is all too often used as a dumping ground for the bodies of murder victims, experiment subjects, and the like, which contributes to its geist population. It also makes the swamp an attractive destination for ghoulcallers, though it is often easier to find a corpse in the marsh than it is to find one's way back out of it. Jadar is an infamous necromancer who haunts Morkrut and plunders grafs for miles around the delta.

A witch named Odila lairs somewhere in Morkrut, serving a demon who presumably also dwells in the marsh.

Vizag Atum. Because of the prevalence of geists in and around Selhoff, a large oracular cult known as the Vizag Atum communicates with geists to divine secrets unknown by the living. The most famous Vizag is Minaldra, a tall, pale woman who sits in a perpetual trance engulfed in fumes from a smoldering brazier filled with mandrake root. A few of her dire oracles are often quoted by fanatics convinced that Avacyn's madness heralds the end of the world. Even as the angels have winnowed the number of cult members down to a scant handful, Minaldra's utterances have become increasingly foreboding—and often incomprehensible.

"Your fields will turn as black as a ghoul's tongue and fire shall be your only harvest."
—Minaldra, *the Vizag Atum*



Choked Estuary ▶ Vincent Proce

The Erdwal

Colloquially known as "The Ditch," the network of underground passageways and crevasses called the Erdwal originated as defensive trenches in each of the three major cities, meant to help the populace resist the attacks of zombie hordes and werewolf packs. Over the years, the trenches between the three cities were connected into a network of defensible walkways for transporting goods and continuing trade even while the horrors of the night are most actively looking for victims. Major merchants of Nephalia have paid special attention to the uses of the Erdwal and have put serious resources into making it a legitimate artery of trade. Thus it has developed a bustling underground economy of its own dealing in all manner of gray- and black-market goods: human blood, assassinations, counterfeit silver, necromancy, curses, and blood sport.

The Erdwal connects in places to gullies and sea caves that offer sheltered hideouts off the main lines of trade. Renegade vampires, necro-alchemists and skaberen who seek seclusion, fugitive criminals, crazed cultists, and even demons are known to lair in these hidden niches. The ghoulcaller Enslow also inhabits the Erdwal, using its passages to travel from graf to graf—while also animating the bodies of those who run afoul of the Erdwal's other denizens.



Gutter Grime ➪ Erica Yang



Drownyard Temple ➤ John Avon

Reckless Waif ➤ Michael C. Hayes

The Drownyard Temple

Off the coast of Nephalia, an enormous stone structure is taking shape within a seagraf where multiple ships have wrecked on the rocky coast. Zombies quarry stones from the coast and carry them across the sea floor to the structure to complete its construction, as angels wheel overhead in utter derangement. To some, the site is a great temple to the gods of the sea. In reality, it is the focal point of all the ley lines that Nahiri has redirected—all the energy of the plane points here, toward the fulfillment of Nahiri's purpose. No inhabitant of Innistrad could guess or even comprehend her true purpose: summoning an Eldrazi titan to destroy the entire plane.

Nahiri is often here supervising the construction of the structure. Some revere her as a god, or a powerful prophet. Some cultists even think she is a vampire due to her pale skin. She never speaks of her purpose, but those who follow her have their own host of assumptions and beliefs: that she plans to make offerings to a sea god who will destroy the angels, that she is summoning a creature from the ocean depths to destroy the land and remake it, that she is channeling magic that will destroy Avacyn and liberate Innistrad's people, or any of a variety of other wild theories.

After Gisa's unsuccessful attack on Thraben, Odric's forces captured her and held her imprisoned in Rider's Lock. While she was being escorted to Thraben for punishment, a mob of skaabs and ghouls attacked the procession and overpowered the guards, even though Odric had tripled their number to ensure Gisa's safe delivery. Having fled Gavony, she is now providing the zombies to help Nahiri—primarily because she finds the effort endlessly amusing. In addition, she hopes that Nahiri will reward her efforts by granting her some power that will allow her to crush her brother Geralf once and for all.





Maw of the Mire ➢ Vincent Proce

The Coastal Cults

In Nephalia, much of the obsession of the human population is directed toward the sea. With twisted stones appearing throughout the province, all pointing toward the sea, and with the church of Avacyn turning against its people, the lost and the mad turn their devotion to the inscrutable waters and the horrors that lurk in their lightless depths. They gather at night in cellars, in the Erdwal, on the rocky coast, and in dark marshes to chant their worship and offer sacrifice to nameless powers. And with each passing day, their madness, obsession, and violence increase—even as their bodies start to warp along with their minds.

The Kralmar Cult. Local legend in the coastal village of Rivstalt describes a terrible monstrosity that feeds along the coast during high tide. It is said to lair in a sea cave that is connected by a maze of cracks and crevices to the Erdwal. For centuries, cultists have made sacrifices at the cave to appease this Kralmar and prevent it from devouring their fishing boats or even their village. In the current age of madness, the cult is more popular than ever before under the leadership of a villager named Ramag. The cultists perform a nightly ritual of offering their own blood to the Kralmar, cutting their palms and immersing their hands in the water of the cave. Less frequently, they kidnap people from Rivstalt or other villages nearby and throw them into the pool as an offering.

Welcome to the Fold ➤ David Palumbo





Midnight Guard ❧ Jason A. Engle

"It serves as evidence of the ancient power of the deep. A reminder that the sea is the only thing worthy of devotion." —Runo Stomkirk

The Gitrog Cult. Dark and deep, Lake Zhava lies in the highlands near Gavony. Villagers who live on the lake's shores and fish its waters have long spoken of a monster living in its depths. Now, that monster rises from the depths on a regular basis, devouring livestock and swallowing fishing boats. Despite the villagers' pleas, the church of Avacyn has sent no cathar or angel to protect them, so the villagers have turned to appeasing the monster with worship and sacrifice.

Runo Stromkirk. Before he was a vampire, Runo Stromkirk was a Nephalian priest devoted to a pre-Avacynian god of the sea. Now, his mind is breaking and he has developed a significant interest in the coastal cults of Nephalia. He has worshipped (protected by his glamer) alongside cultists of the Kralmar and the Gitrog monster, and thrown sacrifices into the waves with other cultists who don't have a name for the entities they worship. His spiritual craving has apparently not been satisfied, and he has not settled down with any one cult. Some human cultists—perhaps seeking to win favor from the Stromkirk line, or perhaps driven by their own mad devotion—revere Runo as a prophet and make offerings to him.

Olgard of the Skiltfolk. A group of warriors and shield-bearers known as the skiltfolk hire out their services to merchants and travelers who wish to cross Nephalia without using the Erdwal or who wish to go to other areas off the beaten path. Each city has a skiltfolk branch whose members defend their charges for a princely sum. Olgard is a member of the Drunau branch who has taken upon himself the mission of investigating these cults and protecting the people who might be harmed by them.

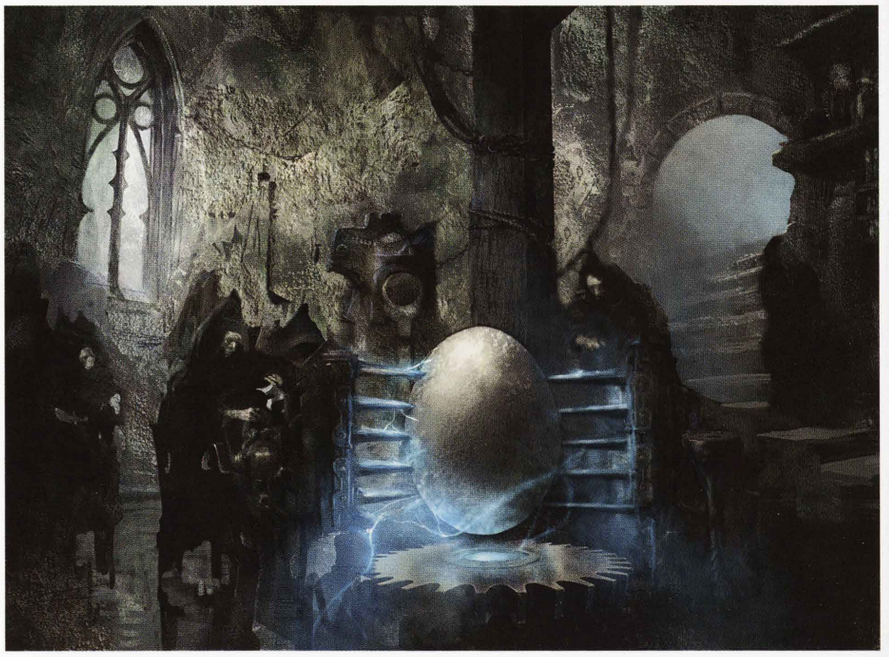
Stitchers of Ulm

Ulm is a small, remote village in Nephalia, near the province's borders with both Kessig and Gavony. To the dismay of its upstanding citizens, the village is best known for Ludevic, a necro-alchemist and skaberen who lives and works in a small manor outside the village. With the madness of the angels, the cathars whose occasional presence would keep Ludevic's experiments somewhat confined have been drawn away to larger concerns, and Ludevic has increased the scope and boldness of his experiments. Worse, he has reached out to colleagues in the necromantic arts, letting it be known that Ulm is a safe haven for their work. His most notorious partner is Geralf of Gavony.

Ludevic of Ulm. The wheezing and reclusive Ludevic of Ulm combines the stitching skills of a skaberen with the technological innovation of a necro-alchemist, harnessing geist energy to create both crazed inventions and living monstrosities. Ludevic is infamous for his experiments, which have resulted in some of the most terrible creations produced by necromancy: winged skaabs combining human and animal parts, lizards mutated to monstrous size, animated constructs inhabited by geists and powered by their energy, and indescribable horrors of warped flesh. He is a powerful mage in his own right, capable of unleashing curses upon entire populations.

Geralf the Skaberen. Weary of the meaningless battles he used to wage against his sister Gisa, Geralf now seeks greater scientific knowledge and understanding of death and animation. Though he still lives in the Moorlands of Gavony, he is in regular contact with Ludevic of Ulm, collaborating on their blasphemous research. Geralf has a homunculus assistant, Oglor.

Other Skaberen. Other stitchers regularly visit Ludevic in Ulm to compare notes and boast of their research accomplishments. Many—perhaps influenced by the coastal cults—have begun using body parts from aquatic creatures in their skaabs, such as scaled fins or suckered tentacles. Hadaken of Selhoff, a disciple of Ludevic who imitated the latter's flying skaab designs, is at the forefront of such efforts.



Ludevic's Test Subject ➤ Nils Hamm

> *"Dear Geralf, your recent work is an inspiration. I have the utmost respect for your approach, and your craft is impeccable. At your convenience, I would be honored to collaborate on a project. I have so much to show you."*
> *—Letter from Ludevic of Ulm*

Nephalia's Scourge

The vampire Jeleva has been seen all over the province, but she lives in an opulent mansion near Havengul, for she finds that the bustling streets of Havengul offer the best hunting to satisfy her particular tastes. A descendant of Runo Stromkirk, Jeleva has broken all ties with her family line and directly opposes Runo's participation in the coastal cults of Nephalia. She is known to play cruel games of cat and mouse with her victims, preying on their minds before devouring their blood. She craves the minds and secrets of mages, particularly the archmages of Avacyn's church. Her own powerful telepathic ability seems to shield her from the madness that is so prevalent in Innistrad.



Jeleva, Nephalia's Scourge ➤ Cynthia Sheppard





Stensia

Clouds of purple and red shroud the sky above the forbidding mountains of the Geier Reach, never allowing the sun's full light to shine on the ground below. The jagged spires of vampires' castles jut up from the peaks, keeping silent watch over the isolated valleys below. Stoic and enduring, the people of Stensia huddle in their stone-crafted villages built against the mountainsides. Wisps of thick fog twine amid the trunks of black pines in the midlands, thick bogs suck dead trees slowly down into their murky depths, and dusky pasturelands provide scant sustenance to flocks of scrawny sheep.

The people of Stensia are accustomed to scarcity—of crops, of light, and of hope. Few plants will grow in the dry and rocky soil of the alpine valleys, and even when the clouds part for a time, the days are short and danger is never far. Only briefly, after Avacyn's return, did they dare to believe that their lot might be improved. The angel Sigarda and her Host of Herons made it their mission to liberate Stensia from vampire control, and many of the castles clinging to mountaintops and promontories are now only broken ruins.

With Avacyn's madness, even that shred of hope has been stripped away. Apparently immune to whatever has driven the other angels mad, Sigarda and her host abandoned Stensia and returned to Gavony to contest Avacyn's rule. The vampires came out of hiding and reclaimed their palaces, and the long-suffering Stensians returned to their stoic gloom. A sense of impending disaster now hangs over Stensia's valleys, and even the smaller hamlets nestled among the mountains have erected fortifications in preparation for the coming doom.

Abandoned by their angels and hunted by vampires, the people of Stensia endure the unending dusk.

Stensia ☙ Vincent Proce



Mountain ➤ Andreas Rocha



Harrowing Journey ➤ James Paick

The Geier Reach

The mountains of the Geier Reach define Stensia's terrain. They rise in three ridges from the highlands at the borders with Kessig and Gavony to the soaring peaks at the far side of the province. The lowest ridge is thickly forested, the middle rises above the tree line, and the peaks of the highest ridge disappear into the ever-present clouds. The highlands are dotted with caves and crevices that provide shelter to a variety of dangerous creatures, from blood-drinking bats and carrion-eating vultures to terrible fiery elementals and one or two dragons. Between the ridges are two valley regions, each broken into several small dales that house the province's human population.

Stensia's people are not an expressive or demonstrative bunch. Countless generations of hardship and proximity to the vampire strongholds—leading to lost children and neighbors—have taught Stensians to guard their hearts. They are proud and fervent in their beliefs but seem brusque or even cold to humans from other provinces.

Because not many crops will grow in Stensia's rocky soil and dim light, humans rely on sheep for wool, leather, milk, and meat. Shepherding traditions are ancient here, and Stensian wool is considered the finest in the four provinces. Vampire dominance has prevented werewolves from gaining a foothold in the province, so the flocks are relatively safe from predators. Stensia's humans depend on sheep, and its vampires depend on humans—an irony not lost on the vampires.

The Inland Valleys

Between the first and second ridge of the Geier Reach lie the scattered dales called the Inland Valleys. At one end, the Inland Valleys open into a long, zigzagging route called Getander Pass, which leads to Kessig. The rapacious Falkenrath vampires keep watch over this pass, so it is little used. At the other end, Ziel Pass offers Stensia's only access to the sea, a narrow and treacherous path of endless switchbacks descending over sixteen hundred feet to the crashing waves below. The path is haunted by the geists of those who took a false step while attempting to navigate it.

The trail connecting Stensia to Gavony is only loosely called a pass. Kruin Pass is only moderately less steep than any other path across the first ridge of the Geier Reach, but it is the only reliable route between the two provinces. Markov Manor is perched above the pass.

Several dales make up the Inland Valleys. Each is home to scattered hamlets of shepherds and hardscrabble farms, with only two settlements of any notable size: Silbern and Wollebank.

Silbern. Silbern is a cluster of family farms, notable only for the presence of a stone watchtower staffed by fatalistic cathars. Isolated from Thraben, these cathars are unaware of the church's inquisition, and they still take seriously their responsibility to protect the people of the valley—even though they know their efforts are ultimately doomed to failure.

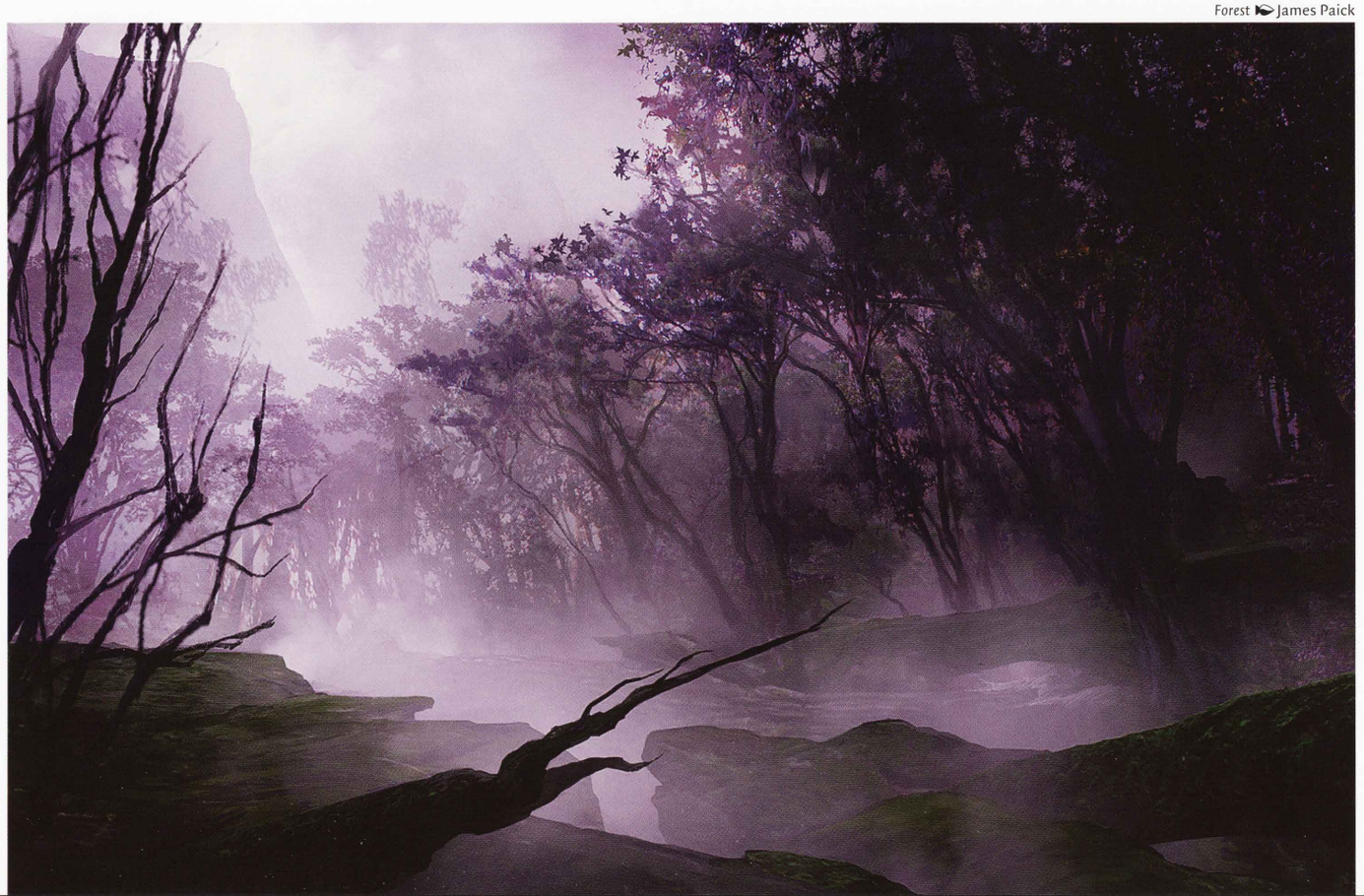
The captain of the Silbern Guard is Cosper Lowe, a handsome and charismatic young man with an almost supernatural ability to calm and inspire the cathars under his command. Around the time of Avacyn's return, he faced and killed a vampire who had singled him out as a target of her infatuation. He still wears a locket that the vampire wore, as a grim reminder of the dangers inherent in Stensian life.

Wollebank. Wollebank is the largest village in Stensia, inhabited mostly by families that eke out a meager living by herding sheep and gathering what vegetables grow in the dry soil. It is also the best-fortified village in Stensia, with high stone walls offering some protection to the stone buildings inside.

Wollebank's mayor is named Deigenhard. He is a stalwart and capable man, and his resolve in leadership was only increased by the loss of his seventeen-year-old son to vampires. Since Avacyn's disappearance, he has worked to bring greater unity and community to the valley villages and their shepherds—enough to draw the notice of the vampire lords themselves.

"There are always fools who attempt to traverse Kruin Pass before sundown, and every time they wind up in a race for their lives." —Old Rutstein

Forest ➤ James Paick



The Midland Range

Dividing the Inland Valleys from those of the Outland, the middle ridge of the Geier Reach is a forbidding range. Only two passes connect the valleys across its precipitous slopes. Hofsaddel is the more often used, a wide and well-trodden pass mostly ignored by the vampires. By contrast, Needle's Eye is a narrow, treacherous, and deadly path haunted by vengeful geists. Worse, the Needle's Eye runs perilously close to the Ashmouth, which gapes in the heart of the mountains, so humans use this pass only in the most dire need.

Somberwald. Despite its darkness, Stensia still holds places of beauty. Between its isolated valleys and forbidding peaks, a winding, melancholy, drooping pine wilderness adorns the hillsides. Wild animals—including bears, stags, and boars—and nature spirits (including both geists and dryads) have fled here over the centuries to avoid the hunters, trappers, and werewolves that prowl Kessig's forests. In a province where humans are the prey, these wild things enjoy relative safety in the vampires' shadow.

> "Bury your dead deep.
> The boars are hungriest while the
> corpse is still warm."
> —Paulin, trapper of Somberwald

Somberwald Dryad ➪ Jaime Jones





Magmatic Chasm ☙ James Paick

Swamp ☙ Andreas Rocha

The Farbogs. Twin bogs, flanking the middle ridge of the Geier Reach, pool at the center of Stensia like puddles of ink. Both were once groves of pines, but those trees now sink into the peat muck at odd angles, creating a tangle of dead trunks. Ancient grafs lie on the peripheries of both bogs, and as the graves dissolve into the slime, angry geists arise. The spirits called corpse candles flit over the treacherous waters of the bogs, luring unwary travelers to their doom.

The Outland Valleys

Beyond the second ridge of the Geier Reach are the Outland Valleys, comprising eight small dales. Of all the communities nestled in the Outland Valleys, the largest are Shadowgrange and Lammas. Both are strange places, unwelcoming to outsiders, whose people are fearful and proud. They interact only with each other, and their relations are not always peaceful. Worse, the abandoned Maurer Estate—a favorite haunt of newly sired vampires—stands above the path connecting the two villages. Only when the brooks that run through the valleys show the moon in their waters do travelers dare a journey past the old estate.





Foreboding Ruins ➪ Adam Paquette

Vampire Estates

Three of the four great vampire bloodlines of Innistrad have their ancestral roots in Stensia, the province that the progenitor of their race has always called home.

Markov Manor. Markov Manor is a hilltop estate overlooking Kruin Pass, built by Edgar Markov, creator of the vampire race and progenitor of the Markov line. From its tallest spires, the High City of Thraben is visible in the far distance.

Until very recently, the first vampire still dwelled in his ancient home, in comparative simplicity relative to the other elder vampires. However, shortly after the opening of the Helvault, Nahiri came to Markov Manor and left it changed. The whole structure has been lifted off the ground, along with an enormous chunk of the bedrock beneath it. Now it hovers above the mountain in brazen defiance of gravity, with only a thin bridge arcing between its iron gates and the ground below. Its spires and balconies are suspended in the air around the building in some sort of eldritch pattern.

More horrible still, the transformation of the manor apparently trapped all the vampires who had the misfortune to be inside at the time. Petrified hands, heads, and feet jut out from the misshapen stone walls inside the great halls of the manor, the only remnant of the vampires who once crowded the place. Edgar Markov has been missing since the manor's transformation and is presumed dead.

Incorrigible Youths ➤ Winona Nelson



Olivia, Mobilized for War ➪ Eric Deschamps

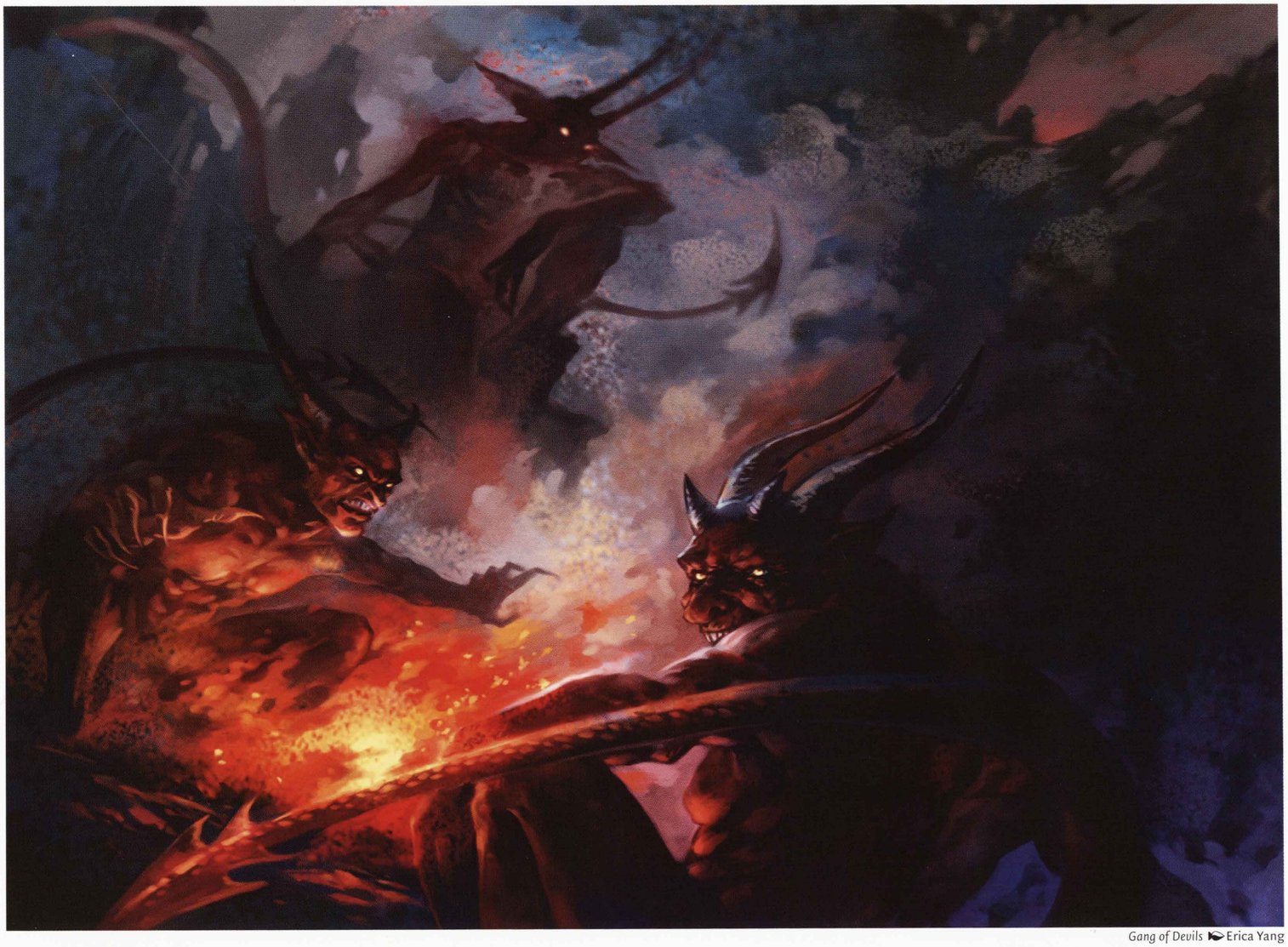


Structural Distortion ➪ Jung Park

Lurenbraum Fortress. Overlooking Ziel Pass, cloaked in mist and surrounded by jagged peaks, is an immense fortress protecting the huge estate of Olivia Voldaren—famous eccentric, bon vivant, and progenitor of the Voldaren bloodline. Lurenbraum is an ancient citadel built for utility, standing in stark contrast to Olivia's ostentatious tastes. The lower third of the fortress is carved directly into the cliff. As the angels go mad and unknown threats assail Markov Manor, Olivia is marshaling her knights at Lurenbraum.

Heron's Grace Monastery. Clinging to the middle ridge of the Geier Reach, between the Hofsaddel and Getander Passes, lie the ruins of Castle Falkenrath. Once a menacing architectural masterpiece that housed scores of vampires, all that still stands is a single tower that now serves as an Avacynian monastery. Topping the tower is a huge steel statue of a heron, honoring Sigarda and the angelic host that plays such a prominent role in Stensian faith. The monastery is a noted pilgrimage destination, drawing the faithful from across Stensia and occasionally from other provinces.

"There is little love between me and my bloodline, Nahiri. If you sought to do me harm by destroying Markov Manor, you have only succeeded in making powerful enemies."
—Sorin Markov



Gang of Devils ➢ Erica Yang

The Ashmouth

Situated in the very heart of the Geier Reach, between the Hofsaddel and Needle's Eye passes and cloaked by the dense forest of the Somberwald, a huge chasm gapes open in the rock. Clouds of ash billow up from its depths, lit by an infernal glow from the magma below. Legend holds that the depths of the chasm open into whatever infernal region is home to demons and devils, for these fiendish creatures are all too common in the mountains around it. Shilgengar, the demon whose pact with Edgar Markov created the race of vampires, is said to have emerged from the Ashmouth, and bands of devils seem to spew forth from its depths at unpredictable intervals.

When Avacyn emerged from the Helvault, her angels destroyed many of the demons and devils that had plagued humanity in her absence. The most obvious and arrogant of the demons were quickly exterminated, but those that escaped the angels or regenerated after their destruction retreated into hiding places like the Ashmouth and the surrounding caverns. Many devils still romp, masterless, through the Geier Reach, but many more serve demonic masters within the sulfurous pits.

The boldest among Stensia's human citizens have taken it upon themselves to finish the noble work Avacyn began. They reclaimed an old tower on a mountainside overlooking the Ashmouth and named it Devilthorn Lodge, using it as a base of operations while hunting devils among the nearby peaks. As long as Sigarda and the Host of Herons remained in Stensia, Devilthorn Lodge was well protected from the devils lurking around the Ashmouth, and hunters found unnatural success in their efforts to slay those devils. The tower is adorned with numerous trophies placed there by successful devil hunters, as well as memorials to the unsuccessful ones.

Now that the angels are gone, however, some fell magic in the lodge seems to have taken on a life of its own. Is it a spirit lurking in the lodge from the time before it was repurposed, or perhaps the angry geist of a fallen hunter? Is some evil essence contained in the trophies taken from slain devils? Or is there a more human power at work—the witches who lair in dilapidated houses in the nearby dark woodlands and bogs, serving the demons of the Ashmouth in exchange for magical power?

The men and women who hunt demons and devils around the Ashmouth are a varied lot. Some are rough-and-tumble frontier types, including hunters from Kessig who decided to hunt for bigger game than bears. Some are devout cathars who have decided to focus their energy on supernatural foes rather than participate in the church's inquisition.

Some, too, are driven by revenge. After a demon killed her three children and imprisoned their souls, Kastinne left her home of Shadowgrange and adopted the lifestyle of a wandering monk. Swearing a vow that most called mad, she descended into the ghastly network of caves below Stensia bent on killing the demon and liberating her children's souls. Against all odds, she emerged from the caverns, triumphant in her quest, and took up a life of demon hunting. She trained and worked with Rem Karolus until he returned to Gavony to confront the angels, and is now a frequent visitor to Devilthorn Lodge.

The vast majority of these hunting expeditions don't get too near the Ashmouth. They circle it at a safe distance, hunting the relatively weak devils and hoping (openly or in secret) that they don't encounter a demon. A few trophies from slain demons adorn the walls of Devilthorn Lodge, but most hunters who end up facing a demon don't return.

Another threat lurks in the region around the Ashmouth: witches who bargain with demons in order to gain magical power. They tend to gather in small covens, living in ramshackle huts among the crags and crannies surrounding the Ashmouth. Thanks to the rough terrain, these structures are hard to find, and devil hunters tend to focus their efforts on hunting down their supernatural foes. All too many hunters, though, have stumbled across a witch coven and never returned.

Into the Maw of Hell ➢ Raymond Swanland



Avacyn's Fate





Always Watching Chase Stone

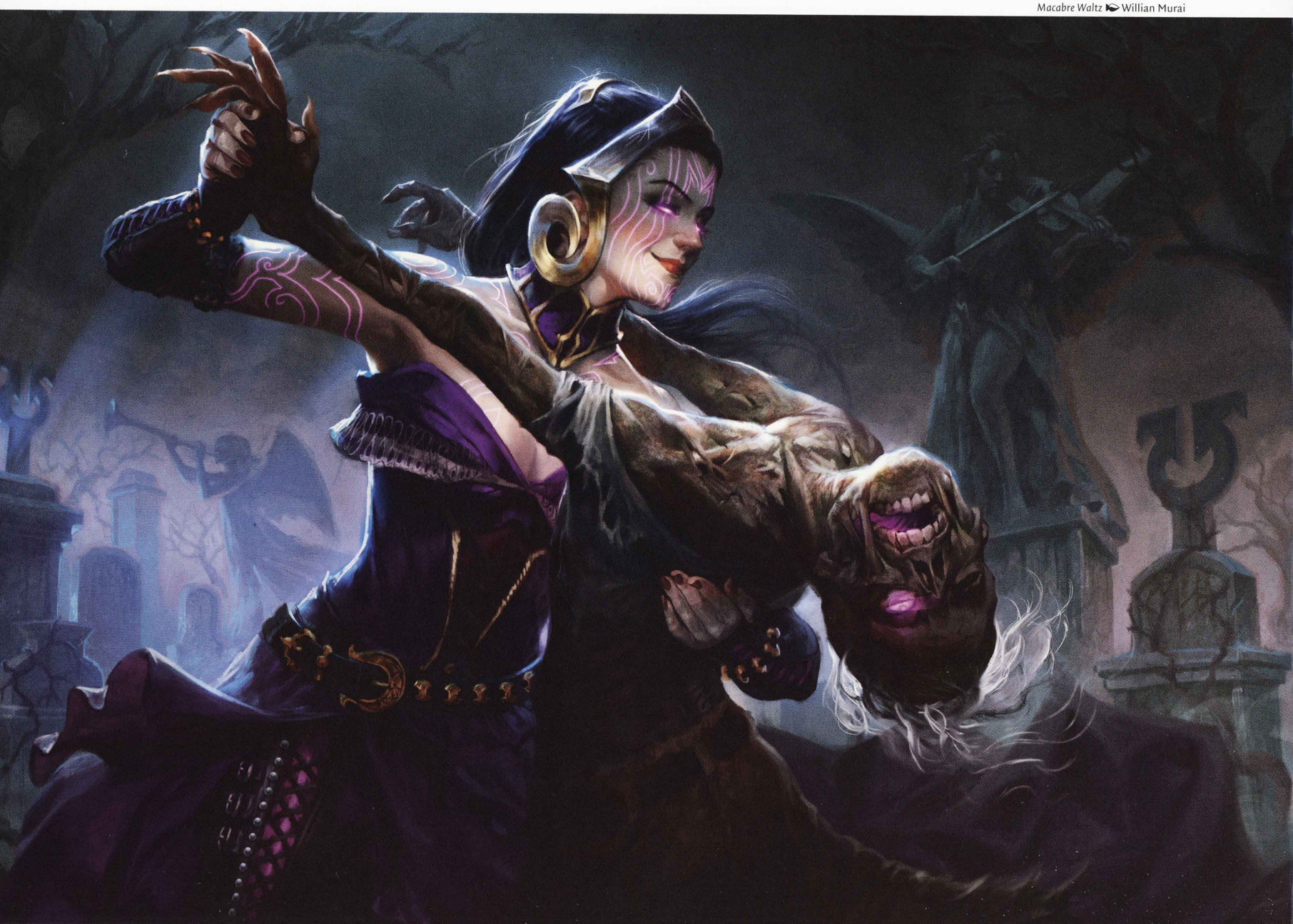
Liliana Vess and the Gatewatch

When the Eldrazi titans were active on the plane of Zendikar, four Planeswalkers came together to destroy them. Given the power to walk between worlds, these Planeswalkers resolved to use that power for the greater good of the Multiverse, to protect planes from the threats that lesser mages can't even comprehend, let alone hope to defeat. Swearing to keep watch against such threats, Gideon Jura, Jace Beleren, Nissa Revane, and Chandra Nalaar formed the Gatewatch—named in memory of fallen Sea Gate, the greatest city of Zendikar, destroyed by the Eldrazi.

The fall of two Eldrazi on Zendikar left several questions unanswered. Two of the Planeswalkers who had originally bound the Eldrazi to that plane—Sorin Markov and Nahiri, the Lithomancer—were conspicuous in their absence, and one of the Eldrazi titans was unaccounted for as well. Though the members of the Gatewatch weren't initially aware of it, all signs were pointing them toward Innistrad and a fateful encounter with the necromancer Planeswalker Liliana Vess.

"Innistrad's ghoulcallers are talented enough, but let me show you what someone with real power can create." —Liliana Vess

Macabre Waltz ➢ Willian Murai



Liliana Vess

Growing up on the plane of Dominaria, Liliana Vess studied the healing arts. But in secret, she supplemented her studies with inquiries into necromancy, believing that the study of death magic could aid her healing work. An encounter with a mysterious Raven Man in the forest near her home led her to combine her studies and concoct a potion intended to heal her grievously wounded brother—but the cure went awry, transforming him into an undead monster. In desperation, Liliana embraced the necromantic arts and raised a mob of zombies to fight her tormented brother, and in the chaos and fury of the battle her spark ignited and sent her to Innistrad, where she could study her sinister magic without guilt or fear of punishment.

Two thoughts drove Liliana's ongoing quest for power. She hoped to reverse the horrible transformation she had wrought on her brother—or at least to end his pain, even if that meant consigning him at last to death's embrace. She also sought to avoid her own death, for she feared nothing more than joining her brother in the void. As the years took their toll and a cure for her brother's curse evaded her, she sought help from the most powerful Planeswalker she knew: the elder dragon Nicol Bolas.

Bolas agreed to broker a pact between Liliana and four mighty demons from across the Multiverse. The demons promised to give Liliana power beyond her dreams and centuries of ageless life. As the fourth demon etched the terms of this demonic contract in glowing lines carved into her skin, she savored the new heights of her magical power—and mentally resolved to free herself from the demons' control by any means necessary.

The magical Chain Veil gave her the means she needed. Its phenomenal power allowed her to defeat the fourth demon, Kothophed, though its magic drains her strength and makes the inscribed lines on her skin well with blood. Then she returned to Innistrad and hunted Griselbrand, the third demon of her pact. She sundered the Helvault, freeing Avacyn and all the demons she had imprisoned over the centuries, then destroyed Griselbrand.

Before she moves on to hunt the remaining two demons, however, she is determined to gain some measure of control over the magic of the Chain Veil, to draw on its power without giving in to its demands. This concern overrode any desire she might have had to help Jace when he arrived on Innistrad, despite the fact that they had a relationship in the past. Eventually, though, her concern for him led her to join the Gatewatch, lending her support in the fight against Emrakul in the hope that she could later draw on their assistance to deal with the Chain Veil and her remaining demons.

Liliana, the Last Hope ➢Anna Steinbauer

Jace Beleren

In his youth on the plane of Vryn, Jace's natural telepathic talents were in turn misunderstood and exploited. He was alienated and harassed for being different, lacking the physical strength to defend himself. Then he was manipulated and betrayed by the powerful sphinx mind mage who taught him to control his magic. In the process of freeing himself from being the sphinx's pawn, Jace badly damaged his own mind as his Planeswalker spark ignited, sending him to another plane with only a fragmentary recollection of his own identity. During this time, he formed a romantic attachment to Liliana Vess, only to learn that she too was manipulating and deceiving him.

After defeating two of the Eldrazi titans on Zendikar, Jace took an oath to keep watch over the planes of the Multiverse as part of the Gatewatch. He already holds a similar role on his adopted home plane, Ravnica, where he is the Living Guildpact who keeps the ten guilds of that city-plane in balance. But the Gatewatch offers him the opportunity to think and act on a larger scale, which intrigues him as a mental challenge in addition to appealing to his sense of responsibility.

Jace can't walk away from an unsolved mystery. He believes everything that exists can be understood, and he dreams of one day knowing everything there is to know. On Zendikar, he learned the history of the Eldrazi from Ugin, the spirit dragon, and he burns with the desire to know more about them, which brought him to Innistrad in search of Sorin Markov. His visit to the plane is complicated by his relationship with Liliana Vess. Given their past romance, he is attracted to her and cares about her, but he doesn't trust her at all.

Jace, Unraveler of Secrets ➤ Tyler Jacobson



"I'm pleased this world has learned the moon affects more than the tides."
—Tamiyo, the Moon Sage

Tamiyo, the Moon Sage

A native of the plane of Kamigawa, Tamiyo is a soratami—a member of a secretive and inquisitive race also called the moonfolk. Her preferred weapons are knowledge, persistence, and the power of the mind. Already an accomplished field scholar on her home plane, when her spark ignited she discovered the vast potential of knowledge about the Multiverse—greater than any power she could ever desire. She sees each new plane as an unexplored treasure trove of knowledge to be brought back to her people's great scroll towers.

Tamiyo has long been particularly enamored with the mysteries of Innistrad and its silver moon. Observing them for many cycles even before Avacyn's disappearance, she carefully charted the forces at work on the plane, including the moon's influence on the lycanthropic curse and the ebb and flow of the vampire frenzies. Her curiosity eventually led her to the door of the famed astronomancer Jenrik of Nephalia, who shared his countless charts and voluminous notes. Tamiyo spent months with Jenrik, poring over his research and adding her own observations.

When Innistrad's guardian angel finally returned to the realm, Tamiyo wrote extensive theories about the angel's effects on the land, its creatures, and its moon. The nature of the Helvault, the creation of the wolfir, the appearance of the gryffs, and the origins of the newly empowered holy wards all filled her scrolls with more questions than she could answer. Then she discovered Nahiri's work in manipulating the flow of mana on the plane. She entrusted her journal to Jenrik's hands and sent him to Stensia to confirm her theories, while she investigated the effects of the altered mana flow. After the astronomancer was killed within the walls of Markov Manor, the mysteries in the journal's pages launched Jace on his investigations into the strange mysteries of Innistrad and the madness of the angels.



Tamiyo, Sanctum of Serenity ▶ Tianhua X

Gideon Jura

Gideon Jura grew up on the plane of Theros, where he developed from a young ruffian into a great hero trained in the magical art of hieromancy, the magic of law. But hubris led to his fall. He was sent by the sun god of Theros, Heliod, to destroy a rampaging titan serving Erebos, God of the Dead. After he and the ragtag soldiers who followed him—his Irregulars—killed the titan, Gideon went one step further and tried to destroy Erebos himself. The result of Gideon's hubris was the death of his Irregulars. This tragedy caused his Planeswalker spark to ignite.

Gideon feels responsible for other people and believes that he must protect anyone who can't protect themselves. This impulse led him to battle the Eldrazi on Zendikar, and after a tremendous victory, his commitment to standing watch over all the planes of the Multiverse led to the formation of the Gatewatch.

"When the Eldrazi destroyed Sea Gate, they threatened all I believe. The people of Zendikar were nothing more than stinging flies in their path. Never again. For Sea Gate, for Zendikar and all its people, for justice and peace, I will keep watch." —Gideon Jura

Lead by Example ✒ Johannes Voss





Spreading Flames ➽ Chase Stone

Nissa Revane

Nissa Revane is an elf from the plane of Zendikar. In her youth, horrible visions haunted her, which proved to be a glimpse of the pain that Zendikar was suffering as a result of the Eldrazi's presence—the plane's plea for help. Nissa answered that plea and vowed to help Zendikar, but a horrific glimpse of Emrakul lying imprisoned beneath the mountains speared through Nissa's mind, igniting her spark and hurling her away from her home plane.

To Nissa, planes are living beings inhabiting the Multiverse, not pieces that make it up. She can see the connections between all living things and she believes these connections extend in a great pattern across the Multiverse. She can communicate with the souls of planes, and she sees it as her duty to convey their words to others who can't hear their voices. After delivering Zendikar from the contagion of the Eldrazi, she is determined to help other planes that suffer in similar ways.

Chandra Nalaar

On her home plane of Kaladesh, Chandra Nalaar was the daughter of innovative artificers who were known for finding clever ways to circumvent the authoritarian Consulate. Chandra's ambition and impulsiveness, though, inevitably led her into conflict with the Consulate. Cornered by Consulate soldiers, her innate magical talent sparked to life—manifesting in consuming flames that wreaked havoc beyond Chandra's ability to control them. Eventually captured and sentenced to execution, Chandra was suddenly blasted out of Kaladesh when her Planeswalker spark ignited, leaving an inferno in her wake.

Impetuous and hot-tempered, Chandra has a fierce sense of justice. She hates to see figures and structures of authority suppressing people's rights to freedom and self-expression, and she tends to express her indignation with fiery actions first and words later. She joined the Gatewatch as a way to fight against tyranny in any form, to ensure that people across the Multiverse could live free.

Shadows over Innistrad —

Avacyn's emergence from the Helvault brought a renewed surge of hope to the beleaguered human population of Innistrad. But even as Avacyn and her angels were driving back the monsters of the night, Nahiri—also newly liberated from the moonsilver prison—set in motion her plans for revenge against Sorin, who left her to languish in the Helvault for a thousand years.

Called the Lithomancer, Nahiri was a master of the magic of stone, and she created twisted stones across the plane to alter the flow of mana through the land. She focused this mana toward a single point off the coast of Nephalia, where she and her allies constructed a monumental stone temple. And there, the concentrated pooling of mana began to tear open a hole in the plane, summoning one of the Eldrazi titans from the Blind Eternities to destroy Sorin's home plane.

A side effect of Nahiri's manipulation of mana, unintended but not unwelcome, was the strain it placed on the minds of Avacyn and her angels. The combination of the altered ley lines and Emrakul's slow approach through the Æther ultimately broke Avacyn's mind.

And thus madness swept across the world as the fleeting hope of angelic protection was transformed into horror.



Shadows over Innistrad Tyler Jacobson





"As Zendikar has bled, so will Innistrad. As I have wept, so will Sorin." —Nahiri

The Madness of Avacyn

Once the protector of Innistrad, Avacyn began terrorizing the people of the plane. Crazed angels, their wings and weapons spattered with blood, brought fire from the sky down upon a small village near Thraben. Houses burned, people were reduced to ash, and refugees fled screaming into the night.

In her madness, Avacyn came to believe that protecting Innistrad meant purging it of humans as well as the evil forces she was meant to keep in check. In the same way that the body's immune system reacts to infection, the angels—created as protectors for the plane—were thrown into a chaotic fury by the corruption infecting Innistrad. Viewing humans, werewolves, and vampires alike as a plague, Avacyn—in her more violent phases—brought utter annihilation upon human dwellings and settlements. The angels left blackened scars across the land where villages once stood.

The devout officials of the church, certain that Avacyn could do no wrong, scrambled to respond to this unexpected behavior. Prompted by the subtle influence of the demon-worshipping Skirsdag, the bishops of the Lunarch Council launched an inquisition to aid the angels in purging the "sinplagued" from among the faithful. In their zeal, they executed more innocent people than evildoers, and the reign of terror expanded beyond the angels' reach.

Flameblade Angel ➢ Cynthia Sheppard

Nahiri's Challenge

Nahiri recruited the ghoulcaller Gisa to help her, channeling Gisa's destructive impulses toward her own purposes. Gisa raised a huge crew of ghouls from the wreckage of a ship off the Nephalian coast and put the zombies to work hauling rock and building what she called the Drownyard Temple.

With construction of the Drownyard Temple under way, Nahiri finally let Sorin know that her vengeance was at hand. Traveling to his ancestral home in Stensia, she transformed the manor and killed the vampires inside, embedding them into the walls as she tore the manor apart and reshaped it into a great stone pattern. Then she returned to Nephalia and waited.

When he heard of the slaughter at Markov Manor, Sorin returned there for the first time in centuries. He had not been welcome at his ancestral home since his creation of Avacyn, but word that his grandfather might have been slain—along with dozens of his kin—led him to an awful homecoming.

The moment he saw the transformation of the manor, he knew who was responsible—the pattern of Nahiri's stonework was like a signature upon her work of art. He searched in vain for Edgar Markov's body among the slain vampires, and then left in fury, setting out to find Nahiri and punish her for this slaughter.

Liliana's Refusal

With two Eldrazi titans slain on Zendikar and the third one still in hiding, Jace came to Innistrad in the midst of its madness, looking for Sorin Markov. When Jace encountered the spirit dragon on Zendikar, Ugin told him that Sorin and Nahiri were supposed to join him and help him deal with the Eldrazi. Ugin urged Jace to find the delinquent Planeswalkers so the Eldrazi could be imprisoned again, but Jace and his allies decided to kill the Eldrazi instead. Once Ulamog and Kozilek were slain, though, the problem of the third titan remained. While the other members of the Gatewatch remained on Zendikar, Jace rushed to find Sorin. Knowing that Sorin originally came from Innistrad, he began his search on this plane.

He also had a contact on Innistrad, someone he thought could help him not only in his search for Sorin but also in dealing with the threat of the Eldrazi. So, his first task on the plane was to call on Liliana Vess.

Jace asked Liliana to help him unravel the Eldrazi mystery, but she rebuffed him, concerned with her own pursuit of her demons and her efforts to bring the Chain Veil under control. Rather than offering him any aid, she warned him to avoid the dangerous vampire Planeswalker. Jace came away from the meeting suspecting that Liliana was hiding something—probably some dark scheme of her own.

Fiery Temper ➢ Johannes Voss



The Mystery of Markov Manor

Heedless of Liliana's warnings, Jace found his way to Markov Manor, but what he discovered was completely unexpected. In the heights overlooking Kruin Pass, the manor had been transformed into a gravity-defying pattern of floating stonework. The promontory on which it was built had crumbled into a narrow path of floating stones supported by empty air. Towers, halls, and buttresses hung at odd angles around the sundered core of the manor building.

Carefully traversing the broken stone, Jace found a ghastly scene inside the manor. The inner structures of the building were transformed like those outside, but faces and limbs protruded from the walls at odd angles that suggested the strange patterns outside. Countless Markov vampires were dead, embedded in the stone walls of their ancestral home.

Drawn onward in horrified fascination, Jace finally discovered one clue to the mystery unfolding before him. Among all the vampires, one human was encased in stone, one protruding hand clutching a slender book bound in silk. Freeing the book from its owner's cold grasp, he recognized the writing of the moonfolk of Kamigawa. Painstakingly deciphering the script, he learned the private thoughts of another Planeswalker who was investigating the strange events on the plane—but the clues contained in the journal posed more questions than they answered.

Written by the moonfolk Planeswalker Tamiyo, the journal detailed her research into the flow of mana through the lands of Innistrad. Tamiyo observed that the mana flow had an effect on the behavior of Avacyn and her angels, and she reported what she was able to learn about the origin of Avacyn: that Sorin Markov created the archangel to protect Innistrad and its people. Connecting these two facts, Jace realized that the madness of the angels might be connected to Sorin. He reasoned that retracing Tamiyo's steps might reveal clues to Sorin's location.

"Every answer seems to lead to a more terrifying question." —Jace Beleren

The Ashwood Chapel

Believing that the journal would lead him to Sorin, Jace puzzled out the clues it held. Tamiyo's journal described two locations that seemed to be nexus points for the mana flow of the plane, including a chapel in Kessig and a field of cryptoliths in Gavony. Her description of the chapel in Kessig—where the stones had been warped in a way similar to those of Markov Manor—got his attention, so he went there first.



Jace's Plea ➢ Mathias Kollros

Jace found the chapel just as Tamiyo had described—the walls twisted as if the stones were turning their heads to look toward the sea. Tamiyo had found that the warped stone was altering the flow of mana through the Ulvenwald. Jace realized that Markov Manor must be doing the same thing in Stensia, meaning that the chapel must have been connected to Sorin in some way.

The Field of Twisted Stones

Tamiyo's journal next led Jace to a field in Gavony's Moorlands. The boulders strewn about the field had been reshaped into angular formations that all pointed in one direction—toward the coast of

Nephalia. The appearance of these cryptoliths was different from what he observed at Markov Manor, but the effect was clearly the same, channeling mana across the plain. Here he could tell that the stones were channeling the mana in a specific direction, so he set off in that direction.

By this time, Jace's investigation was bordering on obsession. He had uncovered a mystery too great for him to wrap his considerable mental abilities around, and he became totally fixated on solving it. He was determined to follow the clues in Tamiyo's journal wherever they might lead him.



Pore over the Pages ➪ Magali Villanueve

Declaration in Stone ☜ Tyler Jacobson



The Drownyard Temple

Following the stones to the rocky coast of Nephalia, Jace discovered a great stone ring encircled by more of the twisted cryptoliths. The immense structure emerged from the water near the wreckage of a huge trade ship. Hordes of zombies carried massive stones from shore and lay them in place to build what looked like an eldritch temple dedicated to some elder god of the sea. Jace hid in the shadows, watching the zombies toil as angels wheeled in the sky overhead, madly circling the structure like moths around a flame.

The presence of the zombies infuriated Jace. Though Innistrad had more than its fair share of ghoulcallers, he strongly suspected Liliana's involvement in this mess. This seemed to explain her behavior at their first meeting, where she had warned him off of looking for Sorin, as if she were hiding a guilty secret. He suspected that she had turned Avacyn against the angel's original purpose and perhaps against Sorin himself, so he resolved to confront Liliana again. At this point, he was driven by an inquisitiveness that had come to border on obsession.

Epiphany at the Drownyard ➤ Titus Lunter



In fact, Nahiri was channeling the mana of the plane toward her drownyard temple in order to summon Emrakul from the Blind Eternities and destroy Innistrad. The zombies were not Liliana's work but that of the ghoulcaller Gisa, who had abandoned her rivalry with her brother to aid the Lithomancer's efforts.

"This is it! All the cryptoliths point here!"
—Jace Beleren





Liliana's Indignation ➤ Daarken

Jace's Reprisal

Jace returned to confront Liliana Vess about her role in Innistrad's madness. Believing that the zombies at the Drownyard Temple pointed to her involvement, he accused her of using her magic to drive the angels mad and turn Avacyn against Sorin Markov. Liliana tried to reason with him, but Jace had convinced himself of her guilt and launched an all-out magical attack.

Unfortunately for Jace, Liliana still wielded the power of the Chain Veil. Though she was trying to hold her power back, Jace's attacks made it harder and harder for her to pull her punches. She pleaded with Jace to stop before she was forced to hurt him, denying any involvement with the temple in Nephalia. Finally, she smote him with a vicious blow that left him gasping on the floor, forcing him to halt his assault at last. The sight of blood oozing from the etchings on Liliana's skin—a result of her use of the veil—unnerved him.

Liliana was more concerned, however, with Jace's obsessive behavior. She warned him that he was growing dangerously fixated on this mystery—an obsession she could relate to, thanks to the influence of the Chain Veil. She told him that she was worried for him, but he brushed off her concern, anxious to get to the real heart of the matter. If Liliana wasn't involved in corrupting Avacyn, then Avacyn was the only clue he had left. He decided to go to Thraben Cathedral to confront the archangel, to save the plane from the madness of Avacyn, and—he hoped—to find Sorin at last.

Sorin's Plea

Meanwhile, Sorin Markov had traveled to Ziel Pass to visit Olivia Voldaren. Although the vampires of Innistrad hated Sorin because he created Avacyn to curb their predation, he appealed to Olivia for aid in hunting down and confronting Nahiri. His initial appeal fell on deaf ears, but after Sorin incapacitated the half-dozen vampires she ordered to seize him, she reconsidered her hasty judgment.

However, she still withheld her aid until Sorin promised to destroy Avacyn. Creating the angel was his greatest betrayal against his own kind, and in her madness Avacyn had gone beyond any notion of maintaining balance, threatening to destroy the vampires right alongside the humans they fed on. Until she was gone, Olivia argued, no life on Innistrad could thrive. With a heavy heart, Sorin agreed to unmake his creation.



Avacyn's Judgment ➧ Victor Adame Minguez

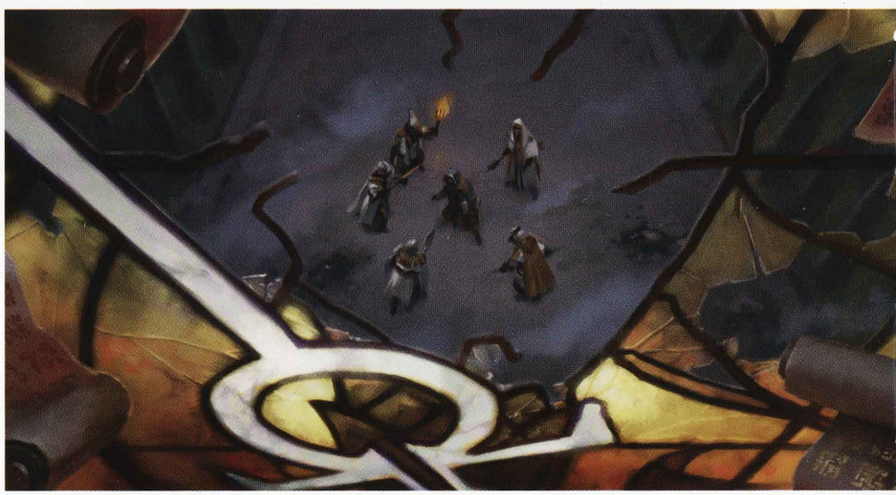
Jace and Avacyn

Leaving Liliana, Jace sought out Avacyn in the heart of Thraben Cathedral. The cathedral was distorted in much the same way as Markov Manor, solidifying Jace's belief that Avacyn was the key to finding Sorin, and he snuck past its guardians—both cathars of the church and Avacyn's angels—to reach the innermost chambers.

There he found Tamiyo, the moonfolk Planeswalker who had written the journal. After sending Jenrik to Markov Manor (with her journal in hand) to confirm her suspicions about alterations to the mana flow through Stensia, Tamiyo's own investigations had eventually led her to Thraben Cathedral. While she quietly observed, staying beneath the angels' notice, Jace stormed into the archangel's loft ready for a confrontation.

Seeing Jace's frantic obsession, Tamiyo invited him to touch the stillness of her mind, which he did. In the alien but serene passages of the Moon Sage's thoughts, Jace found the calm he needed to confront Avacyn—and not a moment too soon.

"True riches are found in the mazes of the mind."
—Tamiyo, the Moon Sage



At the Cathedral ➧ Kieran Yanner

Avacyn appeared and attacked. Jace and Tamiyo joined forces to battle the archangel, with Tamiyo fighting Avacyn in the air while Jace helped from the ground. It was a fierce struggle, and Avacyn was more powerful than either Planeswalker expected. At first, Jace believed that he could trick or immobilize Avacyn. He was wrong. Normal angel minds are alien enough, but Avacyn's mind was a maze of turbulence that even Jace could not handle.

Undaunted by the Planeswalkers' mental attacks, Avacyn unleashed her angelic fury upon Jace and Tamiyo. The cathedral itself began to crumble under her unrelenting assault, knocking Tamiyo to the ground, and Jace ended up flat on his back, Avacyn's deadly spear poised to strike him through the heart.

Jace and Tamiyo ➤ Kieran Yanner



Tamiyo's Journal

Tamiyo and Jenrik had been working together for weeks to unravel the mystery of Nahiri's deeds on Innistrad and the effects of the mana distortion. After exploring the Kessig chapel and the cryptoliths in Gavony's Moorlands, Tamiyo predicted the existence of a similar site in the mountains of Stensia, and she sent Jenrik to confirm that information. Of course, he met an unfortunate end in Markov Manor.

When Jace returned her journal, Tamiyo was grateful to have it back even as she mourned Jenrik's fate. Examining the notes that Jenrik had added to her own writings, however, Tamiyo grew very serious. Something in his words—though they verged on incoherent ravings—made everything that Tamiyo had learned so far come into clearer focus.

"I fear we might already be too late," she told Jace—an instant before Avacyn appeared.

Sorin and Avacyn

Sorin arrived just in time to prevent Avacyn from killing Jace. Sorin and Avacyn fought an epic battle inside the cathedral. While the two battled, Jace created an illusory diversion to keep the remaining angels and cathars busy while he waited to confront Sorin.

Sorin had made Avacyn, and only he could stop her. He knew that she was destroying the balance he had created her to maintain. Aware that she had been purging humans and vampires alike, Sorin had been agonizing about what he had to do, but Olivia Voldaren's demand had made his choice clearer, and the time to act had come. To save Innistrad, he had to unmake his creation. There was more to their relationship than just creator and creation: Sorin had put something of himself into the angel, and the decision to unmake Avacyn caused him terrible grief.

Ultimately, Sorin and the angel ended up in the Vault of the Archangel where Avacyn was created. Sorin "unmade" Avacyn, undoing his act of creation, and she was gone from the world.

With Avacyn's destruction, the last of the protections woven over Innistrad were broken. Not only did destroying Avacyn not solve the problems facing the plane, it made things worse. In the absence of Avacyn, the way was finally paved for Emrakul to enter Innistrad.

Jace Confronts Sorin

Jace had finally found Sorin, and he confronted the vampire Planeswalker after Avacyn's destruction. He wanted to know why Sorin hadn't come to Zendikar to help Ugin when the Eldrazi broke free, and he urged the vampire to return to Zendikar with him to find and destroy the remaining Eldrazi.

Sorin suddenly realized the full extent of what had been happening. Almost oblivious to Jace's questions, he realized that Nahiri had been warping the stones and reshaping the ley lines—and that she was almost certainly summoning one of the Eldrazi to the plane. And he had played right into her plan by destroying Avacyn, casting down the last barrier that stood between Innistrad and the Eldrazi's insatiable hunger.

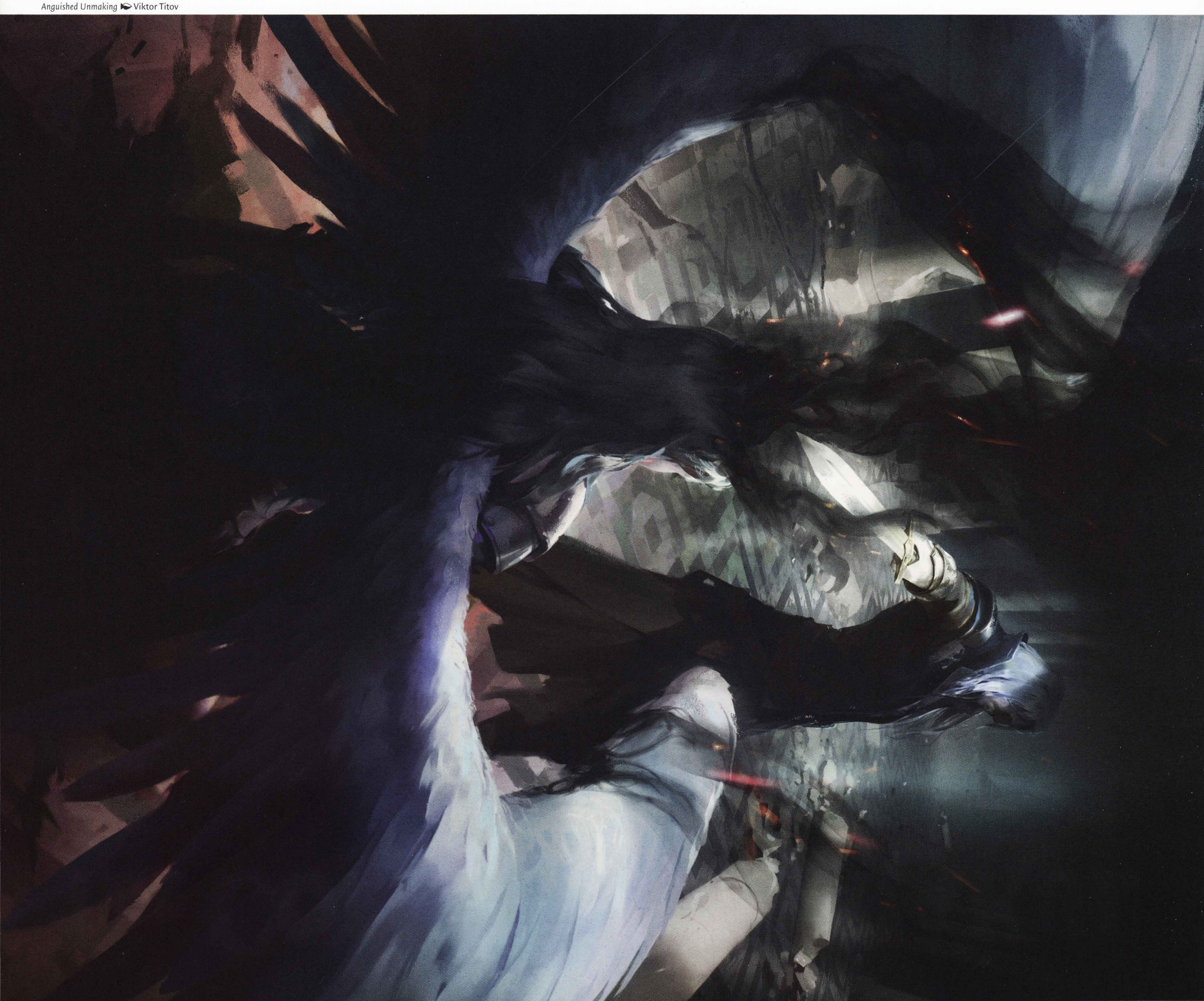
Just as Sorin tried to communicate this information, Jace's head exploded in pain as Emrakul entered the plane at last.

"We must all make sacrifices for the good of Innistrad." —Sorin Markov

Sorin's Arrival ➤ Wesley Burt



Anguished Unmaking ➽ Viktor Titov



The Coming of Emrakul





Stromkirk Occultist ✒ Magali Villanueve



Emrakul, the Promised End ➽ Jaime Jones

Rise of Emrakul

Emrakul is the largest and most fearsome of the three Eldrazi titans that were imprisoned on Zendikar. She causes silent horror wherever she soars, embodying desolation, emotional and physical distance, the chill of the void, and the terror of being alone. Thus, in many ways, she is perfectly at home on Innistrad.

Even the approach of Emrakul pressed on the minds of Innistrad's inhabitants, straining their sanity, and her full manifestation amplified the effect. Cultists who bordered on mad obsession descended into gibbering adulation of their Eldrazi idol, and scholars who pried into dark secrets fell catatonic with the full realization of the alien horror they had seen.

Emrakul arrived in Innistrad without her brood of drones and other spawn, so she immediately began warping the natural (and unnatural) native creatures of Innistrad in her monstrous image. Beings transformed into Emrakul's spawn manifested fleshy lattice structures, distorted symmetry, and tentacles ending in knobby, vestigial digits. Those who had already begun their descent into corruption before the Eldrazi's arrival were warped almost beyond recognition, but even those who fought against the madness during her approach were susceptible to the life-warping affects of her presence.

Emrakul's arrival set a new series of horrific events in motion, as humans and monsters alike found their very existence threatened by this blasphemous horror.

Coax from the Blind Eternities ➪ Jaime Jones



Hanweir Battlements ➪ Vincent Proce

Titans of the Blind Eternities

The Eldrazi are a race of interplanar beings that once traveled from plane to plane through the Æther. They fed on the mana and life energy of the planes, leaving lifeless husks in their wake as they moved from one world to the next. Their origin is unknown and their nature is poorly understood, and if they have thoughts or goals beyond simply feeding, their minds are utterly inscrutable. In their true forms, these titans are huge, alien leviathans made up of an immaterial substance akin to the Æther. Even their magic transcends the categories of spells and classifications of mana, recognizing no distinction between the mana of one land and that of another.

Eternal Scourge ➤ Winona Nelson



Long ago, three planeswalkers took action to try to destroy the Eldrazi. Ugin, the spirit dragon, fought the Eldrazi with his breath of invisible flame, using his knowledge of colorless magic to match the Eldrazi's colorless nature. The vampire Planeswalker Sorin Markov brought his familiarity with magic that leeched life energies. And Nahiri, a stone-shaping lithomancer, planned to force them into physical form and then destroy them utterly, ridding the Multiverse of the monstrosities.

But their plan failed. The Eldrazi were too immense, too alien, and too powerful to destroy, and the planeswalkers were forced to consider a desperate course of action. Although they couldn't kill the Eldrazi, they could imprison the astral abominations on a single plane, cutting them off from the Blind Eternities and preserving the rest of the Multiverse. This plan worked. The Eldrazi manifested in physical form on Zendikar, became confined by the network of hedrons, and thanks to the magic of the imprisonment spell, sank into harmless dormancy.

Three monstrous Eldrazi titans were bound on the plane of Zendikar: Ulamog, Kozilek, and Emrakul. No one can say for sure whether more titans exist somewhere in the vast Multiverse, but these three have power enough among them to threaten countless planes. The ancient Planeswalkers forced them into a material form in order to bind them on Zendikar, and once they broke free, their first priority was amassing enough energy to leave Zendikar and return to their astral forms.

Nahiri's work on Innistrad, redirecting the flow of mana to the Drownyard Temple, gave Emrakul the energy she needed to leave Zendikar. With the destruction of Avacyn, the Eldrazi was able to project her physical form into Innistrad and begin the process of feeding on the plane.

"The emergence of the Eldrazi isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as you've already lived a fulfilling and complete life without regrets."
—Javad Nasrin, *relic hunter of Zendikar*

On Zendikar, multitudes of lesser Eldrazi emanated from the titans when they were active, extending the titans' will and reach across the plane, harvesting mana and life energy that was then channeled back to the titan. In effect, the great multitudes of lesser Eldrazi were organs of the titans, serving sensory and digestive functions for these alien beings. On Innistrad, though, Emrakul's influence was more subtle. Rather than creating her own broods, she began to transform the native life-forms of Innistrad into Eldrazi horrors.



Witness the End ➤ Igor Kieryluk



Wretched Gryff ➤ Darek Zabrocki

Emrakul

Emrakul is the largest and undoubtedly the mightiest of the three known Eldrazi titans, drifting through the sky like a mountain unmoored from the bedrock. Drawn to Innistrad by Nahiri, Emrakul's purpose is horribly straightforward: to consume the mana of the plane. In her wake, she leaves not barren waste, but warped and twisted life—life reshaped into twisted lattices of flesh and writhing tentacles squirming with insatiable hunger, with minds reduced to gibbering madness.

> *"It hung in the sky like a storm cloud, all looming presence and writhing tentacles."*
> —Thalia, Knight-Cathar

The Silent Horror. Emrakul is a grotesque monstrosity with a superficial resemblance to an alien jellyfish. The great dome of her body is about six hundred feet wide, and rises over two hundred feet from the tangled mass of strangely jointed tentacles dangling below. The body is spongy, with a latticelike pattern of magenta flesh partially covered by a rocky crust that shades from blue at the rim to gray at the top. A lavender light glows like a great eye in the center of her body. Her tentacles jut out in all directions, squirming and writhing in constant motion. They range from bright magenta near the underside of her body through various shades of blue and purple. An unnatural quiet falls upon the land wherever she moves, muffling sound and disorienting the minds of nearby enemies.

Desolation of the Void. Emrakul's unnatural quiet creates a sense of utter desolation. She is sometimes called the Aeons Torn, because looking at her is like gazing into an abyssal void, an overwhelming emptiness. Even soldiers massed in an army against her feel utterly alone, unable to function together and cut off from any aid. Remaining in her presence long enough can lead to madness—the shattering of rational thought, the utter loss of purpose, and even the dissolution of identity.

Gravitational Distortion. Alone among the three titans, Emrakul does not move along the ground but drifts slowly and silently through the air. Around and beneath her, gravity's function is altered, allowing her to ignore its pull. Other flying creatures can move more easily in the titan's proximity—if they can overcome the mind-numbing terror of Emrakul's presence—but creatures on the ground beneath her lose their footing and might even drift into the air toward her, flailing helplessly as they go.

Corruption of Life. Emrakul's proximity not only shatters minds, it also has a distorting effect on living flesh. In contrast to the utter desolation left in the wake of the other titans, Emrakul's passage is marked by the warping of living things, from plants to people. Trees and vines contort themselves into knobby, tentacular shapes. Animals and people, including survivors of battles where Emrakul was present, sometimes develop fleshy growths resembling the lattice structures of Emrakul's body. Perhaps this corruption represents Emrakul's feeding on mana in some way, or it might simply be the influence of her utterly alien nature.



Drownyard Behemoth ➤ Jason Kang



Grapple with the Past Howard Lyon



Emrakul's Corruption

Rather than unleashing hordes of spawn upon the world as the Eldrazi did on Zendikar, Emrakul caused the living creatures of Innistrad to transform into her spawn, becoming warped and horrible fusions of normal and Eldrazi flesh. A horse fused with its rider, two men merged into a hulking form with two faces, fingers lengthened into writhing tentacles, legs dissolving into wriggling masses—all were just human enough to be recognizable, and all the more terrifying for it. The physical transformation first took hold of humans whose minds had already been touched by the Eldrazi's approach, with mental obsession often manifesting in physical expression, but Emrakul's physical presence affected every living thing nearby.

Stages of Corruption

Beginning with Emrakul's approach and culminating in the attack on Thraben, the physical corruption of an individual person into an Eldrazi spawn progressed in stages. Different people in the same group might be in different stages of corruption at the same time, based on their own propensity to madness. Humans, werewolves, and vampires all followed similar stages, as did animals and many other creatures.

Distorted. Even before Emrakul's arrival, some cultists and those who pried too deep into dark secrets began to change. In this early stage, physical proportions shifted: one cheekbone, shoulder, hand, or leg might grow larger, almost always asymmetrically. Noticeable skin blemishes—not yet resembling the lattice of Emrakul's flesh, but appearing as boils or clumps of cauliflower-like growths—could also appear.



Grotesque Mutation ➤ Dan Scott



It That Rides as One ➤ Daarken

Deformed. In the second stage, a person could develop a dead or bulging eye, huge tumorous growths, curled hands or feet, violent palsy, oozing secretions from the skin or eyes, raw red patches on the skin, and similar deformities. Patches of latticelike growths often appeared on the skin. In some cases, particularly in Nephalia, cultists began to manifest distinctly fishlike features—goggling eyes, scaled or slimy skin, webbing between the fingers or toes, or gill-like flaps on the face or neck.

Disfigured. In the third stage, the lips could shrink away from the teeth, which could rot and fall out, fingers and toes sometimes fused together or started transforming into tentacles, bleeding sores could erupt on the skin, or hideous bulbous growths could appear under the skin. Cultists in Nephalia often grew finlike protrusions or pincerlike hands.

Misshapen. In the fourth stage, flesh often rotted away or grew out of control, either leaving muscle and bone visible beneath or concealing features beneath masses of fleshy lattice or bulbous growths. Bone structure could alter radically, turning limbs into bizarre jointed tentacles or creating additional limbs. Extra eyes could appear in unexpected places, or the head could transform into something resembling a fish or octopus.

Monstrous. The most warped humans were barely even recognizable as such. Some became little more than a mass of writhing tentacles, or lost physical coherence entirely. Two or more creatures could fuse together, joined by fleshy lattice. The "lucky" ones retained a basically humanoid shape, but otherwise appeared completely monstrous, with twisted faces, extra limbs, horny growths, jointed tentacle extrusions, and so on.

Deathcap Cultivator ➤ Karla Ortiz



Gaping Monstrosity ➤ Karl Kopinski



Werewolves and Emrakul

Werewolves progressed through the same stages of corruption, but Emrakul's influence tended to affect the two aspects of a werewolf asymmetrically. So a werewolf might seem mostly normal, even mentally stable, in human form, but then be physically and mentally warped in wolf form—or vice versa. In the later stages of corruption, however, the more corrupted side generally took over, and the werewolf lost the ability to transform at all.

Vampires and Emrakul

The different vampire bloodlines were affected in different ways and to different degrees by the arrival of Emrakul.

The remaining Markov vampires remained mostly free of Emrakul's influence. Sorin mustered them to help him retake Edgar's manor. The vampire aristocrats donned heavy armor and rode skeletal horses, leading troops of ghouls raised by their necromancers. These ghoul soldiers were also armor-clad, and wore helms with visors shaped like stolid human faces. Some blood mages remained among the Markov, anointing their kin with blood to strengthen them in battle.

Along with the Markov remnant, the vampires of the Voldaren bloodline followed Sorin into battle against Nahiri and the cultists she had gathered. Many wielded blood-blessed weapons, which manifested special powers when they came into contact with blood: sapping the strength of nearby enemies, radiating darkness, or empowering the magic of their wielders.

By contrast, the Falkenrath line grew almost unrecognizable. Already feral and monstrous before Emrakul's arrival, the coming of the Eldrazi completed their transformation into batlike monsters, barely resembling humans at all.

Similarly, the Stromkirk vampires who gave themselves over to the Nephalian coastal cults were among the first of Innistrad's denizens to be transformed into Eldrazi spawn. As willing servants of the Eldrazi, they ended up taking leadership over other mutated spawn.

Emrakul and the Dead

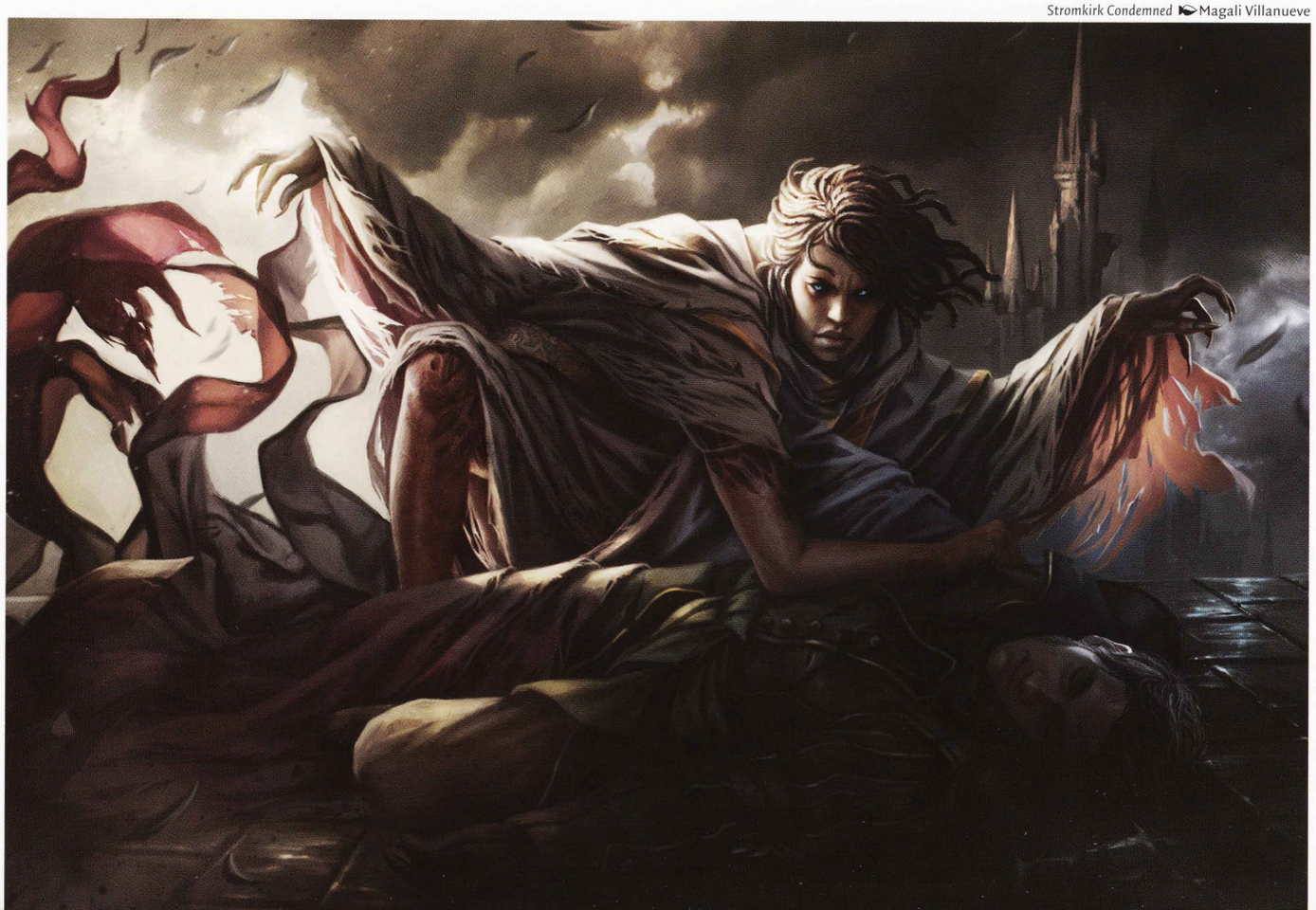
Being already dead, geists and zombies were unaffected physically or mentally by the presence of Emrakul. In the case of benevolent geists, this presented a unique opportunity to humans who sought to oppose Emrakul and her spawn.

Members of the Order of Saint Traft, which was founded by Thalia to resist the evils of the Lunarch Inquisition, voluntarily submitted themselves to be possessed by the geists of former cathars. This combination proved effective in fighting Emrakul's spawn while holding her madness at bay, but it came at a high cost to the living soldier.

Other Creatures

Every living being on Innistrad was subject to the effects of Emrakul's life-warping presence. From farm animals to wurms, monsters and animals alike progressed through stages of corruption similar to those outlined above.

Stromkirk Condemned ➢ Magali Villanueve





Howling Chorus ➭ Matt Stewart



Prying Questions ➤ David Palumbo

Monsters of Gavony: The Flight of Nightmares

The death of Avacyn didn't really solve anything, as far as the angels were concerned. Just as the angels were the first to go mad as Emrakul drew near, they were the first to experience the life-warping effects of the Eldrazi's full presence on the plane. Gisela and Bruna, the two archangels who joined Avacyn in her madness, fused together into a huge Eldrazi monstrosity with two heads, four wings, and a tangled mass of limbs resembling the tentacles of Emrakul herself. The rest of the angels in Gavony were similarly transformed into Eldrazi drones.

Under Emrakul's influence, the fused Eldrazi archangel—called Brisela, Voice of Nightmares—took over both the Skirsdag and the Lunarch Inquisition to help the Eldrazi feed. The demon worshipper Jerren and the rest of the Lunarch Council were killed, and the demon Ormendahl was transformed into an Eldrazi horror like the angels. The sight of angels and demons working together alongside cathars and heretics, all under the Eldrazi's control, was a clear sign of the doom that had come to Innistrad.

The members of the Inquisition and the Skirsdag became so warped that even the Inquisitors' heron masks couldn't hide their deformities any longer. Seeta and the other crazed leaders of the Inquisition claimed that this transformation was a mark of the sin being purged from their bodies, so they started calling themselves the Sinpurged.



Hope in the Darkness ➤ David Seguin



Brisela, Voice of Nightmares ➢ Clint Cearley

For her part, Thalia continued building the Order of Saint Traft, serving as its informal leader. In the desperate hope of finding a way to face Emrakul, Thalia voluntarily surrendered herself to ghostly possession, taking on the spirit of Saint Traft himself in an effort to stave off Emrakul's madness. The possession worked perfectly for her, which inspired the rest of the order to follow her example—with varying degrees of success. Being possessed by the geists of slain cathars took a toll—the longer a geist possessed a member of the order, the more memory the member lost—but this was a price the members of the order were willing to pay in exchange for the magical power and mental fortitude the geists bestowed.

Rem Karolus, after earning a reputation for slaying mad angels, joined the Order of Saint Traft, though he had no interest in subjecting himself to geistly possession. He employed the techniques he once used to slay angels to fight the Eldrazi, including the transformed angels, with a passion bordering on mad obsession. He became a haunted man, with everything he once believed in lying in ruin, and grimly focused on pursuing the largest and most horrifying prey.

Other members of the order included cathars who remained uncorrupted, one or more Goldnight archmages, and other desperate members of the church who had managed to escape Emrakul's influence. They used the gryff as their emblem. Together, they fought to retake Avacyn's Cathedral from the Flight of Nightmares, and managed—by working together and thinking creatively—to outwit and overcome the Eldrazi angels and demons. Against the greater threat of Emrakul, however, they were hopelessly outmatched.

"You must shatter the fetters of the past. Only then can you truly act."
—Rem Karolus, *Blade of the Inquisitors*

The Order of Saint Traft

Odric and Thalia were forced to flee Thraben as the Lunarch Council was slaughtered and the church came under the Flight of Nightmares' control. Taking refuge with Sigarda in Videns Parish, they nursed their wounds and sought to gather allies. The Host of Herons did not last long after Emrakul's rise, with only Sigarda—the Last Heron—remaining to challenge the Eldrazi and the corrupted angels.

After betraying the rest of the Lunarch Council to save Thalia, Odric was a broken man. Even though he was turning away from the corruption of the Skirsdag, the loss of everything he ever believed in left him with little will remaining to fight against the Eldrazi. However, he became an advisor to the Order of Saint Traft, offering strategic advice for what he believed to be utterly hopeless efforts. His disciple, Grete, gave her full support to the order.



Thalia, Heretic Cathar ➢ Johannes Voss

Monsters of Gavony: Cultists Triumphant

In several towns across the Nearheath of Gavony, the cultists grew so great in number and power that they could come out of hiding and take control of their villages. Humans who had been corrupted and driven mad by Emrakul transformed into horrific monstrosities with fishlike features, tentacles emerging from odd places on their bodies, and similar mutations. They offered those few who remained sane as sacrifices to Emrakul, as the Eldrazi's influence warped their minds, their bodies, and even their physical environment.

Knights and Witches

Despite many members of the order going insane and transforming into monsters themselves, the Knight-Inquisitors of Saint Raban continued to root out cultists in the countryside. As the influence of Emrakul grew, the power of the cultists did as well, and many cathars were killed.

"May angels carry him into the Blessed
Sleep with dreams of sunlit days
and moonless nights."
—Tomb inscription of Saint Raban

Other opposition to the Eldrazi cults came from scattered lodges of "witches" who derived their power from alliances with nature spirits. Plainly dressed and generally indistinguishable from ordinary villagers, these forcemages used spells and herbs to ward against the Eldrazi and calm the humans who had gone insane (though they could not cure the madness).



Cryptolith Rite ➢ Zack Stella

The Fall of Hanweir

The moon shone bright and full above the barren fields of Videns Parish. Hanweir had once been the breadbasket of Gavony, but its fields were black and blighted, its bare vines glistened with oozing, pus-like sap, and its fruit trees, gnarled and twisted, had uprooted themselves and wandered into the night, partaking in the world's madness. Soldiers paced along the town's great palisade, uneasily gripping spears, checking and rechecking the mechanisms of the mighty crossbows they hoped would protect them from the wrath of the angels. As one, Hanweir stood against the horror of a world gone mad.

A shadow drifted across the moon, dark and terrible, alien and inscrutable. It pulsed and writhed, and the world writhed with it.

Flesh melted and twisted as the doomed of Hanweir screamed in agony. Soldier and peasant, shopkeeper and council elder—they all fused together, body and soul, into one writhing, protoplasmic mass. Stone and wood, thatch and roof—buildings, streets, plazas, and wells flowed and melded together with the flesh and spirits of the living. Twisting tentacles writhed out from a viscous globule of living ooze. Skulls, bones, weapons, and stones hung suspended in the horrible amalgam. Lashing out in unthinking hunger, the ooze spread over the barren fields and wasted vineyards, surged at random across Videns Parish, and added reclusive farmers and their homes to its horrible mass.

As one, every part of Hanweir became a single incomprehensible entity, a part of the world's madness.



Hanweir, the Writhing Township ➪ Vincent Proce



Ulrich of the Krallenhorde ➤ Slawomir Maniak

Monsters of Kessig: The Dronepack

After Emrakul's arrival, a new werewolf howlpack began to stalk the Ulvenwald, a group of werewolves mutated into horrible Eldrazi forms, which the people of Kessig soon started calling the Dronepack. Most of these werewolves had discernible canid shapes, but they were no longer capable of changing form, and a few retained the basic outline of their human form. Unlike other werewolves, they did not howl, but hunted in eerie quiet, with only a vague shuffling and snuffling announcing their approach.

The werewolves of the Dronepack were primarily drawn from the Vildin Pack, which already consisted of the most blood-crazed and vicious of werewolves. They were all in advanced stages of physical corruption and their minds were gone—wiped clean to make room for Emrakul's inscrutable desires. They continued to hunt as a pack in a bizarre echo of their past behavior, governed by the instinct of their wild nature.

The savage alpha of the Krallenhorde, Ulrich, became an unlikely ally to humanity by leading his howlpack against the mutated horrors of the Dronepack. He emerged into society from time to time to secure human allies in the fight, restraining his primal nature long enough to make a show of goodwill. He had every intention of hunting human prey once more as soon as the Eldrazi threat could be vanquished, but in the meantime he welcomed human assistance against the common foe. A few members of the Vildin Pack who had escaped Emrakul's corruption also joined forces with the Krallenhorde, but these savage werewolves could not be trusted to fight alongside ordinary humans without turning on their supposed allies.

For their part, the rangers of Kessig who had hunted the terrors of the transformed Ulvenwald fought a desperate but ultimately futile battle against the Dronepack. Hunters and trappers who were ill-prepared to fight even ordinary werewolves quickly fell before the onslaught of the Eldrazi-warped horrors.

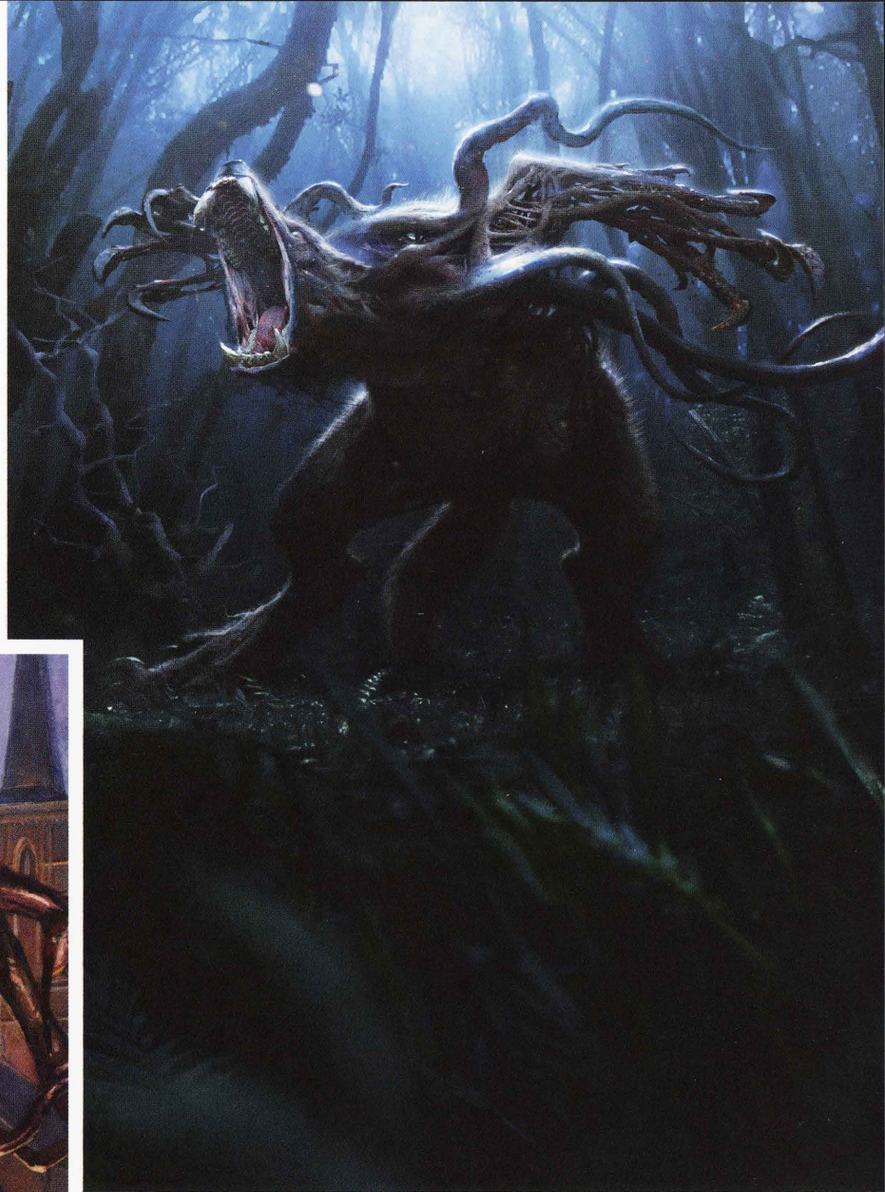
"There will come a time when the only prey left will be each other."
—Ulrich of Krallenhorde Pack

Monsters of Kessig: The Thing in the Grotto

Gatstaf Grotto used to be a sacred place, site of a natural spring and an Avacynian altar blessed by Sigarda and the Host of Herons. When Avacyn emerged from the Helvault, she appeared in the grotto to an assembly of werewolves and werewolf hunters, creating the race of wolfir and transforming many of the curses that afflicted Innistrad. Thereafter, it became the center of operations for the Quiver of Kessig, a group of woodland rangers associated with the church of Avacyn. But with the arrival of Emrakul, the transformed grotto became host to a horror that devoured anyone who dared enter, and even threatened the nearby village.



Fibrous Entangler ➽ Steven Belledin



Dronepack Kindred ➽ Jose Cabrera

The so-called Thing in the Grotto was a monstrous, many-headed creature that resembled both wurms and maggots, with characteristics of Emrakul's spawn as well. Despite its size and bulk, it hid easily by melting into the shadows, in defiance of the laws of physical space. The heart of its lair was the old Avacynian shrine carved into the walls of the grotto, now defiled by the creature's filth. No one who ventured into the grotto ever made it that far, however, and even those who wandered too close to the edge of the chasm could be snatched away by a snapping mouth at the end of an impossibly long neck.

Driven from the grotto, Captain Raf Gyel continued to lead the Quiver of Kessig—a relatively recent offshoot of the parish-blades, the cathars devoted to escorting travelers along the crossways—from its new base of operations in Gatstaf's parish church. The order made several forays into the grotto, but these always ended in disastrous defeat.





Geier Reach Sanitarium ➤ Cliff Childs

Monsters of Nephalia: Spawn of the Deep

Emrakul emerged into Innistrad from the Drownyard Temple off Nephalia's coast. Her approach had sent a growing tide of madness into the plane, and her physical arrival brought a surge of psychic noise that broke minds already teetering on the edge of sanity. Her movement up the coast was accompanied by a rash of lunacy and violence that dwarfed anything seen in the weeks prior to her arrival.

The Eldrazi's proximity also had a profound physical effect on living creatures in the province, particularly the humans and vampires who had earlier been drawn to the coastal cults. Cultists who once made sacrifices to the Kralmar, the Gitrog monster, or Runo's nameless sea god recognized the true and proper object of their devotion in Emrakul, and they began to be transformed into her likeness. This corruption manifested in terrible fishlike mutations, with scales, gills, fins, and tentacles appearing all over faces and bodies. In this monstrous state, they abandoned their past lives and followed Emrakul up the coast toward Thraben.

At the same time, the monstrous horrors once propitiated or adored by these cultists were transformed by Emrakul's presence. The Kralmar, the Gitrog monster, and similar creatures became even more horrific, losing any resemblance to creatures of the natural world. Livestock and wild animals were similarly warped and corrupted. No living thing was immune to her corruption—even the algae growing in town sluices and sewers could develop tentacles that emerged from narrow pipes to grasp at potential prey. Moss and lichens in the tunnels of the Erdwal experienced similar growth, turning Nephalia's subterranean crossway into a nightmarish digestive tract.

Though these mutated beings weren't directly controlled by Emrakul, they were all moved by the Eldrazi titan's desire to feed on Innistrad. In effect, like Eldrazi spawn on Zendikar, the most corrupt of them served as digestive organs for Emrakul, helping her consume the mana that infuses the plane. In a gibbering throng, they followed Emrakul up the coast toward Thraben, devouring everything in their path as more and more hideously mutated creatures joined their ranks.

Ishkanah, Grafwidow ➪ Christine Choi





Borrowed Malevolence ➢ Volkan Baga

Unlikely Allies

Although humanity's great last stand was to occur in Thraben, Nephalia's coast was lined with smaller battlefields. Resistance came from all quarters: cathars, the skiltfolk mercenaries, merchants, elders—anyone who managed to resist Emrakul's corrupting influence and maddening presence for any period of time. The skiltfolk leader Olgard, who had spent months investigating the coastal cults, became a leader of this resistance, mustering his surviving companions to organize and train other defenders.

The dire threat of Emrakul and her spawn forced the humans of Nephalia to join forces with even the enemies of civilization—werewolves, vampires, ghoulcallers, skaberen, and necro-alchemists alike. Although these monsters and heretics were no less susceptible to Emrakul's corruption than anyone else, those who resisted it were ready to take up arms against such a terrible threat. In fact, ghoulcallers found that their zombie creations were particularly effective soldiers against the Eldrazi, since they proved immune to Emrakul's influence. Of course, all parties to these alliances recognized that any such partnership must be temporary. If the threat of the Eldrazi could be overcome, the erstwhile allies would immediately fall upon each other's throats once more.

Monsters of Nephalia: The Ospid Horror

The world has gone mad.

Monsters that dwarf even the grotesque skaabs born of the most twisted imaginations of Selhoff's stitchers now surge across the land. People I have trusted, even loved, have given themselves over to obsession, violence, or despair. And Avacyn? She is gone again. If the whispers from Thraben are to be believed, she is dead.

And the things I have done in her name will burn on my conscience forever.

As if I could atone for the blood I spilled in the Elgaud Grounds, I sought to battle the so-called Ospid Horror, to end the legacy of generations of evil. I brought with me a group of young cathars—a handful of soldiers fresh from their training—and marched them to the ancestral manor of the Sarka family.

The manor stands near the Ospid River, just above Selhoff's Delta. Travelers have long avoided the estate, for the local gossip held that strange howls, grunts, and gibberings were sometimes heard from inside its grounds, particularly at night. The inhabitants were known to be hostile to strangers and they were never seen in town, but a single servant—a tall, lumbering man with no tongue, carrying written instructions—would sometimes travel into Selhoff on errands for the family. He was given a wide berth.

The legend of the Ospid Horror suggests that a monstrous corruption runs in the family, and that every other generation produces a hideous, inhuman creature. For years, the locals blamed the Ospid Horror when livestock was found mutilated or people disappeared at night, even when it was more likely that a cultist, werewolf, or filthy skaberen was responsible.



Tenacity ➤ Zoltan Boros



Steadfast Cathar ▶ Dan Scott

The rumors and legends did not prepare me for what we found in the manor.

The stone wall surrounding the Sarka lands was warped, as if it had begun to melt and been reshaped under a lunatic's hand. An iron gate blocked the roadway, similarly misshapen, the sharp tips of its metal bars bent to point out and down at any who approached. I cannot say whether it was an accident or some malign intelligence that drove one of those metal spears through the skull of Elda Hamm when she forced the gate open.

As we rode to the manor, the front door opened and that mute servant awaited us, silhouetted against a weird greenish light from within. We dismounted, and I signaled my soldiers to have their weapons sheathed but at hand, ready for the first sign of danger. The servant beckoned us inside. Who knows whether he had any idea of the horror that awaited us.

The mother greeted us, Jotti Sarka. A bent and twisted old crone, she bore the mark of her ancestral curse even if she did not deal with demons herself. She spoke lovingly of her two dear sons, Edgard and—well, she did not name the other one. She called him her dear, her sweet, her angel, her boy. She seemed to be prattling about nothing, and I listened with only half an ear as I tried to assess the danger.

I thought I heard churning water, splashes, and the squelch of mud from the direction of the river.

Then Edgard came into the room, and every sword leaped from its sheath, a fine testament to the training of my young soldiers. He was a monster, barely recognizable as having ever been human. His arms were huge clawed things with knobbly tentacles sprouting from the skin, his face was distorted beyond recognition, and his long neck was a tangle of fleshy lattice. As his mother cackled in glee, he fell upon us. The thought of what he did to Gerad and Koss makes the bile rise in my throat—I cannot write it, but I record their names at least so their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Those of us who survived managed to take the Edgard-thing down, though many of us were injured in the effort. He made a pitiful mewling as he fell, and his mother wailed in grief and despair. I almost struck her down out of pity, but I suddenly remembered the grief of those in the Elgaud Grounds, and I stayed my hand.

As the mother drew a shuddering breath between wails, I heard plodding footsteps drawing near the house. I shouted an order and led the way back out the door, shouldering the lumbering servant aside. And we saw it.

The Ospid Horror defies description. Shapeless flesh, writhing tentacles, dripping marsh weeds, gaping maws, distorted limbs, and everywhere that sickly lattice of magenta flesh.

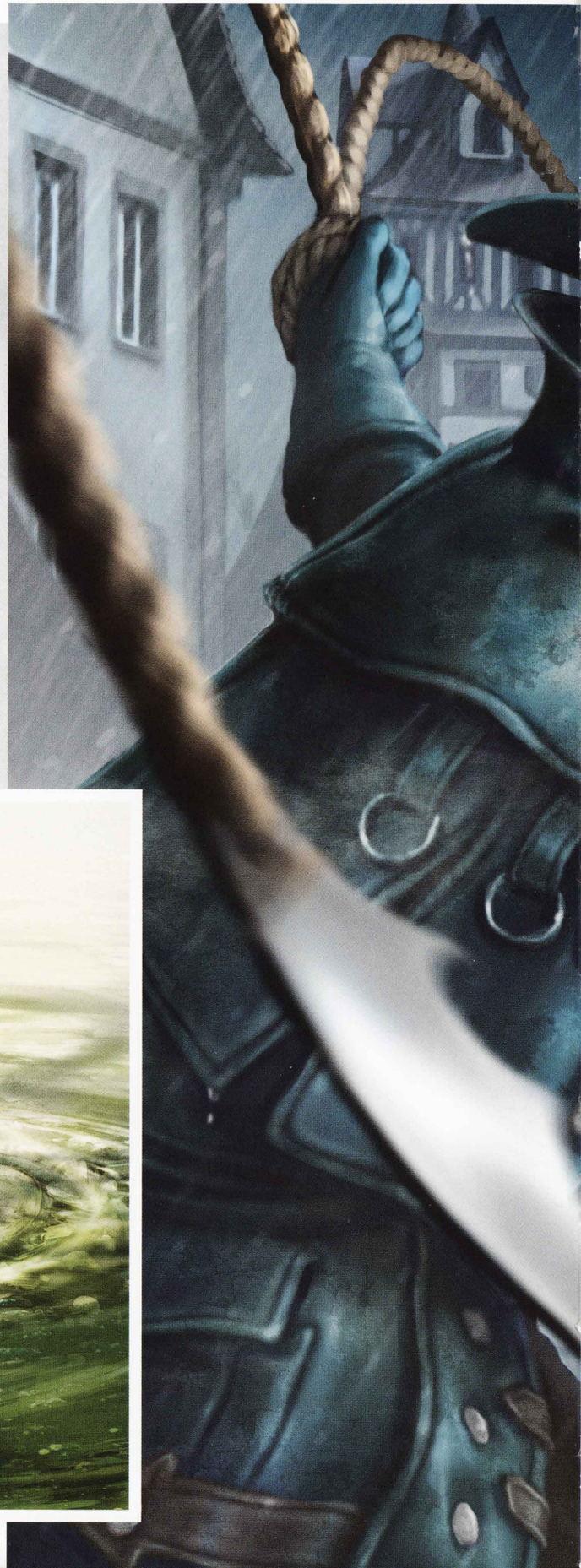
Hannis went down first, then Grodd and Perall, then Foote, and finally Elden. In the end, Jedda and I stood alone against it, the swords of the fallen jutting from its monstrous form, sickly ichor dribbling in a constant stream onto the flattened black grass. She dealt the killing blow as I distracted the thing, and if she had struck a moment later I would have been gutted. As it died, it disentangled, its latticed flesh writhing open into shriveling fingers, and then dissolved. Without a word, we put our backs to it and to the Sarka estate.

I have not atoned. On behalf of the Lunarch Council, I saw evil everywhere, and turned a blind eye to the true monstrosities like the Ospid Horror. One less nightmare haunts our land, but eight young cathars no longer stand to fight against the numberless horrors that remain. There can be no atonement, no forgiveness, no reconciliation.

The world has gone mad.

—From the Journal of Captain Eberhart of Elgaud

Fiend Binder ➪ David Gaillet





Gone Missing ➪ James Paick





Mindwrack Demon ➢ Matt Stewart

Monsters of Stensia: The Ashspawn

With Emrakul's arrival, the Ashmouth in the heart of Stensia's Geier Reach was utterly transformed. If it once linked to an infernal realm where demons and devils dwell, that link was altered to pass through some alien region where the Eldrazi held sway. The plumes of ash rising from the chasm ceased, and the magma glow in its depths was replaced by shifting patterns of colored lights that reflected on the clouds above in an eldritch aurora. The fleshy lattice characteristic of Emrakul's passage covered the chasm walls and spread out over the surrounding rocks, and jointed tentacles that seemed to move of their own accord sprawled outward from the gaping maw.

Warped and twisted demons emerged from the chasm. Almost unrecognizable, these creatures sprouted extra limbs, additional mouths, great curving horns, and jointed tentacles of their own, all mottled with Emrakul's characteristic lattice of flesh. No longer content to lurk in dark caverns, these horrors started to spread through Stensia like extensions of Emrakul's will—and her hunger. In their wake, the land was drained of mana and transformed in the Eldrazi's likeness. The devils of the Ashmouth were likewise transformed, though perhaps less dramatically. Their sense of sadistic mischief became contagious, spreading like Emrakul's madness with the devils' passage.

The wandering monk and demon hunter Kastinne met a tragic fate. People had long called her mad; with Emrakul's arrival their calumny became truth. Already obsessive in her hunting, she snapped when Emrakul arrived, her body and mind transforming into new and horrible forms. She came to resemble the demons she once hunted, with ghastly horns and warped limbs, and her prey became the humans who once mocked her.

Most of the would-be devil hunters who frequented Devilthorn Lodge found themselves ill-prepared to face the horrifically transformed demons that emerged from the chasm. One bold trapper, however—a man named Paulin—rose to the challenge. Though he never had any interest in the devil hunts out of Devilthorn Lodge, the transformation of the Ashmouth and the resulting spread of Emrakul's touch through the Somberwald drove Paulin into action. Adapting the tools of his trade to hunting Emrakul's transformed minions instead of bears and elk, he ended up leading bands of slayers to hunt the transformed Ashspawn demons across Stensia.

Monsters of Stensia: Falkenrath Predators

Even before Avacyn's return, the vampires of the Falkenrath line were the most brazen about their predation. Accordingly, the angels struck hard at the Falkenrath line when Avacyn emerged from the Helvault, leveling several Falkenrath castles. With Emrakul's approach and arrival, these vampires underwent a slow transformation into almost bestial forms. The vampires themselves attributed this transformation to a plague they call the "boiling blood," which drove them to solitary lives stalking the passes of Geier Reach. Most of these vampires have been reduced to a bestial state, little more than mindless predators hunting their human prey. Their appearance ranges from merely animalistic to thoroughly warped by Emrakul's influence.

While most Falkenrath vampires are solitary predators, a particularly old scion of the family named Anje Falkenrath has gathered a hunting pack of her kin. Organized as a group, they can take on bigger prey, including well-guarded caravans of merchants or pilgrims. Anje has a goal beyond feeding: she wants to reclaim Falkenrath Castle from the monks who live there.

In the wake of Avacyn's return and Sigarda's protection of Stensia, Heron's Grace monastery—what was once Falkenrath Castle, the home of the Falkenrath line—drew people from across Innistrad and from all walks of life to visit it in pilgrimage or take vows and join its order of monks. Sterin Gorn, the abbot of the monastery, was a devout man, trained as a knight-cathar but committed to a life of peace and devotion. When Anje Falkenrath came to claim her ancestral home, however, Sterin was forced into an ill-fated battle against her vampire pack. He made a valiant effort to organize his monks and visiting pilgrims into an effective defensive force, but his efforts were doomed from the start.

"Barbarians! They burned my favorite chair! We'll kill them all!"
—Anje Falkenrath



Ravenous Bloodseeker ➢ Anna Steinbauer

Eldritch Moon

Sorin's destruction of Avacyn opened a path for an even greater horror to come to Innistrad. Even in her madness, the archangel had given the plane a measure of protection, a metaphysical barrier that prevented Emrakul from manifesting in physical form on Innistrad. But with her destruction, all of Nahiri's plans came to a terrible fulfillment. As the protective wards fell, Emrakul breached the barriers between planes and emerged off the Nephalian coast. The Eldrazi titan floated up the coastline, leaving life warped and mutated into insane and incomprehensible forms in her wake.

Fortunately for Innistrad, the plane still had its defenders. Jace summoned the other members of the Gatewatch to face Emrakul, and they met the titan in Thraben, as the city came under attack from thousands of warped cultists and mutated creatures. Then, with help from unexpected allies, the Planeswalkers combined their efforts in a last desperate attempt to trap Emrakul forever.



Eldritch Moon ➤ Tyler Jacobson



Emrakul's Rise

With the fall of Avacyn, Emrakul—or a physical manifestation of the extraplanar being—rose from the ocean in Nahiri's Drownyard Temple, all according to Nahiri's plan. As the titan fully materialized and rose up, greeted by a chorus of gibbering cultists, her influence intensified, warping the shape and substance of living flesh and vegetation. The mad cultists and crazed angels at Emrakul's side took on new and horrible forms, their mutated bodies transforming further into the likeness of the Eldrazi.

Emrakul hovered over the temple for a time, feasting on the mana that Nahiri's cryptoliths channeled toward that place. As she fed, her influence spread out along the ley lines, infecting most of the plane with her terrible corruption. Then the Eldrazi began to drift up the coast toward Thraben, where the cathedral stood above another nexus of magical power she could drain while extending her influence along other lines of power. All along the coast, mutated cultists, transformed beasts, and nameless monstrosities were drawn toward her from miles around, and the coastal villages of Nephalia were left abandoned in her wake.

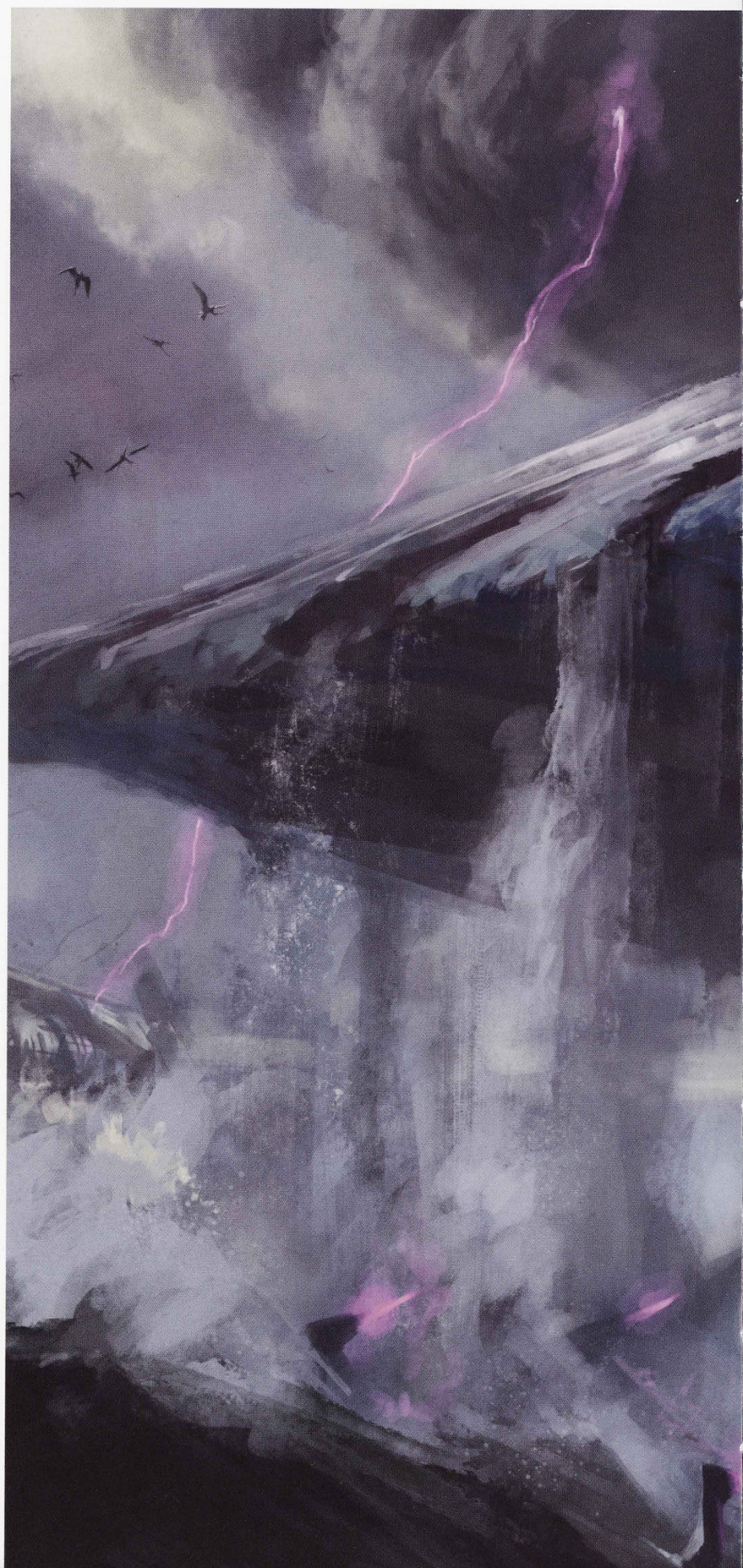
Jace's Return to the Temple

With Emrakul's arrival, Jace returned to the Drownyard Temple with Sorin and Tamiyo. The Planeswalkers came to the spot where Jace first discovered the temple just in time to see the titan begin her coastal journey toward Thraben. As they stood on the rocky coast, the full horror that had lurked behind all of Innistrad's recent troubles was revealed.

Jace and Sorin stared, dumbstruck. Simultaneously overwhelmed by the horror that had been unleashed on the plane and furious with himself for not comprehending the truth sooner, Jace fell to his knees on the rocks, his already weakened mind threatening to break. Sorin was racked with anguish as he realized the full extent of Nahiri's revenge, forcing him not only to destroy his beloved Avacyn but, in doing so, to allow Emrakul to enter his home plane. He saw no solution to the situation. It had taken three immensely powerful Planeswalkers to bind the Eldrazi on Zendikar. There was nothing that he could do alone, and he didn't believe Jace and Tamiyo could make meaningful contributions.

But Tamiyo was a calming presence, helping both Planeswalkers to remain clearheaded. With no particular investment in the survival of Innistrad or its people, she planned to continue her studies, believing that Emrakul's arrival added new dimensions to her study rather than rendering it moot.

As the initial wave of horror and despair faded under Tamiyo's calm, Sorin settled into a smoldering fury and determined to find Nahiri and make her pay for her actions. But Jace found new resolve. He and the other members of the Gatewatch had destroyed the other two Eldrazi titans, Ulamog and Kozilek, on Zendikar. He felt sure they could do the same on Innistrad against only one titan, so he left the plane to gather his friends.



Emrakul Rises ➤ Tyler Jacobson



The Battle of Markov Manor

With Emrakul's arrival, Nahiri's ultimate revenge was unleashed on Innistrad. The details were of no great concern to her; she expected Emrakul to unleash a tidal wave of devastation and ultimately consume the plane. She felt no need to watch the Eldrazi feed on Innistrad, but she wanted to watch Sorin suffer, to see him feel small and helpless. So she gathered a coterie of mad and flesh-warped cultists, fanatics and horrors, and returned to Markov Manor to await the inevitable confrontation with Sorin.

Sorin raced up the coast from Nephalia toward his grandfather's ruined manor. The farther he traveled, the more he saw Emrakul's horrible influence and the more his fury grew. The plane he had sought to protect was dissolving into madness and corruption, and he saw no way to reverse the catastrophe. The one thing he thought he could do was to destroy the person who had caused him so much anguish.

Arriving in Stensia, Sorin first visited the lavish estate of Olivia Voldaren. He had upheld his end of the bargain by destroying Avacyn, and it was time for her to fulfill her commitment to him. True to her word, Olivia mustered a company of vampire knights—bedecked in elaborate armor and mounted on undead horses—and even donned her own armor to fight alongside her ancient enemy. Sorin sent messengers across Stensia to find any surviving vampires of the Markov line to join him in reclaiming their ancestral home from the one who had destroyed it. At last, Sorin marched at the head of a great vampire host to face his archenemy.

The two Planeswalkers met before the grotesque doorway of Markov Manor, and all else was forgotten. As vampire knights charged into the gibbering throng of Nahiri's minions, Sorin and the Lithomancer joined in a furious duel. Sorin and Nahiri were each older than almost any other living creature, heirs of a different

Campaign of Vengeance ➤ Igor Kieryluk

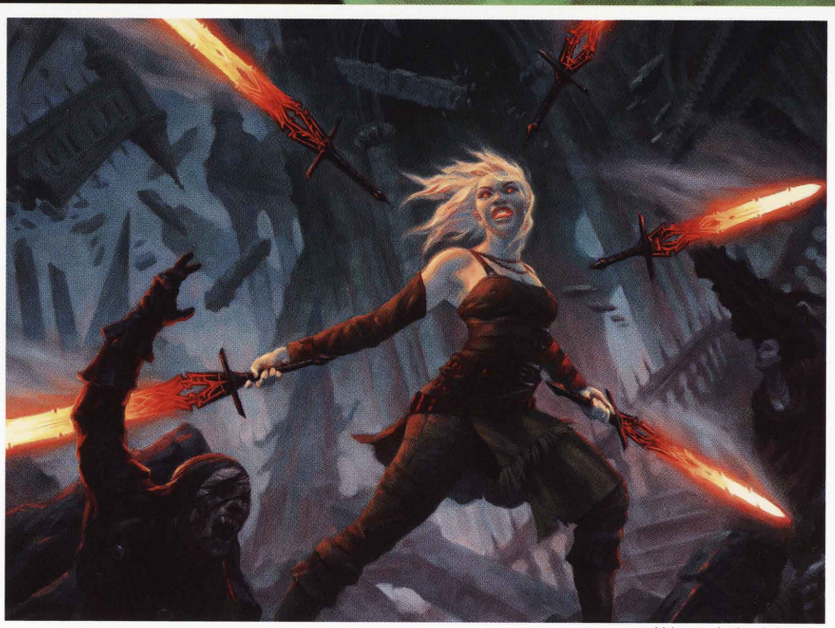




Sorin Marches on Markov Manor ➢ Tyler Jacobson

time when the spark brought almost godlike power. Though their potency was diminished from what it had been centuries ago, the magical might brought to bear in their personal battle dwarfed the combined forces that fought around them. Both vampires and Eldrazi horrors gave them a wide berth—or fell lifeless to the ground with barely a thought from either Planeswalker.

Impelled by her fury, Nahiri fought fiercely and overwhelmed her former mentor. Battering Sorin with broken shards of his own ancestral manor, she wore down his strength and soon pinned him to the ground. Finally, as her cultists drove the vampires away in a rout, the Lithomancer encased Sorin in a cocoon of stone. Just as Sorin had imprisoned her in the Helvault, she trapped Sorin so that he could watch the destruction of his home plane, unable to lift a finger in its defense.



Nahiri's Wrath ➢ Chris Rahn

The Coming of the Gatewatch

Back on Zendikar, the other members of the Gatewatch—Gideon Jura, Nissa Revane, and Chandra Nalaar—were helping the people of a devastated plane rebuild. While Jace traveled to Innistrad in search of Sorin Markov, the other Planeswalkers did what they could to set Zendikar and its people on a path toward recovery.

After Emrakul appeared on Innistrad, though, Jace returned to Zendikar to gather Gideon and the rest of the Gatewatch. After reconvening at the ruins of Sea Gate, the four Planeswalkers journeyed together to Innistrad. They arrived first at the Drownyard Temple, where they saw the madness and devastation left in Emrakul's wake, similar to and yet utterly unlike the physical corruption of Zendikar wrought by the other Eldrazi titans.

The four Planeswalkers immediately felt the influence of Emrakul on the lines of mana flowing through the plane. An incessant rumble of psychic noise seemed to batter at their sanity, leaving them disoriented at first. But Jace—clearheaded again after all his obsessive investigation—used his mind magic to shield his allies from the worst of the effects.

The members of the Gatewatch made their way up the coast after Emrakul, fighting off warped monstrosities and crazed people along the way. Coming to a small village on the Nephalian coast, they found it completely abandoned. The buildings were warped and distorted, covered with latticelike growth suggesting the alien tissue of Emrakul's body. People and farm animals lay dead in the streets and fields, their bodies mutated almost beyond recognition, and the buildings—and some of the bodies—carried signs of the madness that ran rampant before the survivors left the town to follow Emrakul. Gravely, Chandra set the whole place on fire to purge the lingering taint of Emrakul's touch.



The Battle of Thraben ➤ Tyler Jacobson



Emrakul's Influence ➪ Ryan Alexander Lee

The End of All

Emrakul's arrival at the High City seemed to spell the end for all of Innistrad.

The Gatewatch caught up to Emrakul at Thraben, but every crazed cultist and deformed monstrosity from miles around had also come to the city. Hordes of them swarmed the capital, and the defenses of the city broke under the assault. Gideon shone as the battle-captain of the Gatewatch, standing as a human bulwark against waves of enemies and pointing his allies toward weaknesses in the enemy ranks. Thalia led the Order of Saint Traft to help the Planeswalkers, but their efforts were divided between helping the Gatewatch and struggling to retake Thraben Cathedral from the monstrous angels of the Flight of Nightmares. The enemy massed in such numbers that the Gatewatch couldn't even reach Emrakul.

With a sense of growing horror, the Planeswalkers realized that they weren't going to be able to kill Emrakul in the same way they had killed the titans on Zendikar. There, Nissa had been able to channel the "soul" of the plane itself, but Innistrad didn't offer the same elemental power. Jace's ability to shield the others was starting to falter. Soon, the Gatewatch was overrun, and they hadn't even been able to get close to Emrakul. All seemed lost.

Liliana's Zombie Army

Even in her remote Stensian manor, Liliana Vess was not oblivious to the arrival of Emrakul and the corruption spreading through Innistrad. Without knowing exactly what was happening, she guessed that Jace would be right in the middle of it. Soon enough, word of Sorin's activity in the area came to her attention, and she sought out the vampire Planeswalker at the Voldaren estate. Warning her to escape Innistrad, Sorin told Liliana about Emrakul's appearance and what he believed to be the imminent destruction of the plane. He also told her about his encounter with Jace and the foolish boy's intention to fight the Eldrazi titan.

Liliana seriously considered taking Sorin's advice and abandoning Innistrad—along with Jace—to its fate. She had larger concerns, including the Chain Veil, the two surviving demons who still claimed ownership of her contract, and the ultimate fate of her soul. Confronting Emrakul would be a drain on her strength that she could ill afford. And yet, somehow, she found herself unable or unwilling to leave. Innistrad was her home, though it wasn't the place of her birth. It was the first plane she had visited after her spark ignited, the place where she had mastered the necromantic arts, and a plane whose darkness and gloom suited her personality and outlook. She didn't want to see it destroyed any more than Sorin did.

Cemetery Recruitment ✒ Kieran Yanner





Dark Salvation ➢ Cynthia Sheppard

What's more, she told herself, Jace could prove a useful ally. Helping him in this situation would put him in her debt, and obligate him to help her deal with her own problems. She would not admit that some part of her *wanted* to help Jace. They had been lovers once, and she had manipulated him as part of her efforts to escape her demonic contract. Whether it was guilt over her past behavior or some lingering feeling for him, the thought of him dying in a futile effort to save Innistrad—to save *her plane*—did not sit right with her.

So even as Sorin Markov was mustering his vampire army to confront Nahiri, Liliana gathered an army of her own. Traveling from graf to graf, she raised an army of undead ghouls to fight for her. Ignoring any power that lingered in old Avacynian wards over the graves of the dead, she created hundreds of zombie soldiers and led them in a grisly march to Thraben.

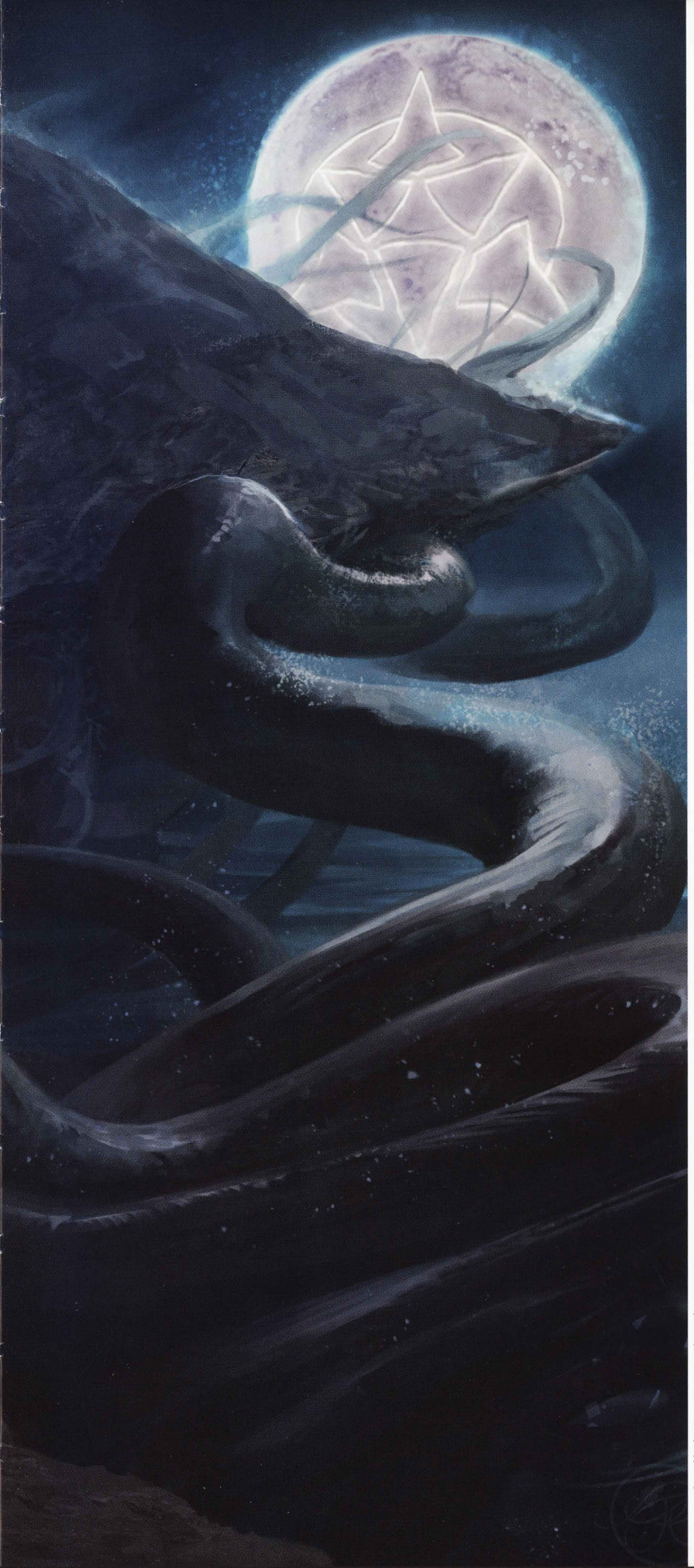
Leading a zombie host to the High City to save the world—the grim irony made her smile.

The Turn of the Tide

As the Gatewatch teetered on the brink of defeat, an army of zombies poured through the breaches in the High City's walls. At first Gideon was almost overcome with dismay, thinking that more enemies had joined the fray. But the ghouls began attacking and destroying the Eldrazi horrors that thronged the streets and held the Gatewatch surrounded, heedless of the terrible toll the Eldrazi exacted on them. Even as her zombies fell, Liliana raised fallen cathars to rejoin the battle. Since the undead were immune to the mutations brought about by Emrakul's presence, the zombies helped turn the tide of the battle.

What's more, the Chain Veil made Liliana a great deal more than just a ghoulcaller. At the head of her zombie army, she cut swaths of destruction beyond what her servants could do, even hurting Emrakul directly. But the rest of the Gatewatch also saw the price she was paying as she drew on the veil's power: blood oozed from the arcane tracings in her skin.





Imprisoned in the Moon ▶ Ryan Alexander Lee

Emrakul's Fall

With the Eldrazi falling back in disarray and Emrakul drawing near, Liliana joined the other Planeswalkers at the heart of the battle. A ring of zombies encircled them, shielding them from the Eldrazi that still pressed the attack. In a moment of relative stillness, Liliana greeted her old friend Jace and his comrades. At that moment, though, all of Liliana's zombies suddenly began to speak at once. Their words were all but unintelligible, but phrases like "vessel of destruction" and "the root of evil" rose above the constant murmur. The Onakke spirits that possessed the Chain Veil usually whispered in Liliana's mind, but something about the presence of Emrakul or the heat of battle allowed them to speak through the unliving mouths of Liliana's ghouls.

There was no time to speculate on the meaning of this event. Emrakul was approaching, and the mental bastions that Jace had created to shield himself and the rest of the Gatewatch from Emrakul's maddening presence were beginning to crumble. And then the clouds parted and revealed the full moon, gleaming in the sky above the ruins of Avacyn's cathedral. As if following the moon, Tamiyo arrived on the scene, floating above the chaos in the streets, and joined the other Planeswalkers.

As Emrakul drew closer, a renewed surge of deranged cultists and gibbering Eldrazi horrors assaulted the Planeswalkers. Gideon and Chandra took up defensive positions among Liliana's zombies to shield the others as they worked out a desperate plan.

All Tamiyo's study of the moon had pointed her toward one important truth: the Helvault was a fragment of the moon, and its power to imprison demons represented just a tiny sliver of what the moon could hold. Jace understood immediately, combining Tamiyo's insight with what he had learned from Ugin about Zendikar's hedron network. Nissa reached deep into the barren, corrupted soul of Innistrad itself. Combining all their knowledge and magical power, the three Planeswalkers cast a mighty spell that shook the foundations of the plane.

As Avacyn's motto said, "What cannot be destroyed will be bound." The tremendous power of the Planeswalkers' magic drew Emrakul into the moon, transforming the moon into a giant Helvault that would keep the Eldrazi bound forever. Or so they hoped.





Oath of Liliana ▶ Wesley Burt

Liliana's Oath

With Emrakul gone, the remaining spawn scattered. The Planeswalkers cheered their victory—and then Liliana collapsed. Her use of the Chain Veil had taken more out of her than it ever had before. She was covered in blood and utterly drained, almost to the brink of death. But as she allowed her zombies to return to the sleep of death, she recovered some of her strength, at least enough to stand.

The four members of the Gatewatch stood with Tamiyo and Liliana and took stock of their victory. Though its streets were choked with rubble, Thraben still stood. All the known Eldrazi titans were dead or imprisoned again. Gideon explained his vision of the Gatewatch: a group of Planeswalkers who would combine their efforts to face the dangers that threatened the whole Multiverse. Out of a deep respect for what they had accomplished together (but not necessarily their means of doing it, in Liliana's case), Gideon invited the Moon Sage and the necromancer to join the Gatewatch and continue to fight together.

Tamiyo declined. Her interests lay in study and exploration, not battle. Imprisoning Emrakul had proven to be an intriguing puzzle, but she felt no particular desire to put herself in similar situations in the future.

Perhaps Gideon hoped that Liliana would do the same. Given a choice, he would not have fought alongside zombies, and seeing fallen allies raised up to continue the battle beyond their deaths had disgusted him. But with some urging from Jace, Liliana agreed to join forces with the other Planeswalkers. With their help, she reasoned, she might be able to get rid of the Chain Veil and still defeat the remaining demons that held her contract. For his part, Gideon acknowledged that destroying the Chain Veil or otherwise getting it away from Liliana would be a good thing for the Multiverse, and barring that, keeping a close eye on her and the veil was probably a good idea.

"I see that together we're more powerful than we are alone. If that means I can do what needs to be done without relying on the Chain Veil, then I'll keep watch. Happy now?"
—Liliana Vess

So the ranks of the Gatewatch expanded as Liliana vowed to keep watch beside the others, and the five Planeswalkers began to look for the next great threat that demanded their attention.

Appendix: Innistrad in the Cards

by Aaron Forsythe

My job at Wizards of the Coast is a fantastic one, although I have hard time explaining to friends and family exactly what it is I do.

As the Director in charge of Design & Development for *Magic: The Gathering*, my current role involves overseeing the vast creative disciplines that go into our gameplay, art, and story, but put simply I am a game designer by trade. What a game designer does can be hard for those on the outside to understand, especially as it pertains to a longstanding gaming franchise like Magic. I'll be at a family reunion or catching up with old classmates, and inevitably conversations will veer to my abnormal occupation, at which point I'll pull out some Magic cards to show people exactly what I'm talking about.

Upon seeing the cards, most of the people I talk to are fairly certain of two things: (a) I didn't actually invent the game *Magic: The Gathering*, yet (b) I am very proud of what I'm showing them. So I get "Wow, did you paint this?" a lot.

Look, I really wish I could paint that well. Most people who knew me back in the day remember me as an aspiring comic book illustrator and big *Dungeons & Dragons* aficionado, so the leap to being a top-notch fantasy artist at this point in my life is not completely absurd. Besides, I can't expect anyone not neck-deep in Magic culture to understand just how fun the text on Huntmaster of the Fells is, or how clever Sanitarium Skeleton is as a discard enabler, or the relevance of any of the other tactical game-design decisions I've had a hand in. To most people, the art is the card.

To that end, Magic is fortunate to have the best suite of talent working on it in the industry, from Jeremy Jarvis and the rest of the dedicated art directors here at Wizards of the Coast, to the legion of freelance illustrators whose brushstrokes bring the creatures and spells to life.

While art makes the game beautiful, it is generally not the purview of game designers. We paint with words and numbers. The ever-changing rules and mechanics are what keep the game fun. But art and design aren't meant to be separate ingredients—rather, they are two lenses through which to view the experience of Magic, and it is my desire that these two lenses be focused as seamlessly as possible into one amazing experience.

How to Build a Plane

The process of creating a world for a Magic card block begins years in advance of the block's actual release. The creative team plans story arcs stretching out as much as seven years, with at least a basic idea of the world that will be the setting for each block. As the process unfolds, each world gets its own concentrated period of attention in a process that looks roughly like this:

1. ***Exploratory World Design.*** Work on fleshing out that basic idea begins long before the block will eventually release. Starting from a core concept—like "Magic does Gothic horror" for Innistrad—the team explores tropes and ideas connected to that core. The goal of this stage is to provide inspiration for the design team to do its own exploratory work, testing out rough concepts for what rules mechanics might appear on cards in the block.
2. ***Prewriting.*** Next, the creative team fleshes out the exploratory concepts into the bare bones of what will eventually become the world and story guide.
3. ***Concept Push.*** When prewriting is done, art directors bring artists into the building to translate those ideas into the visual look of the plane. Over the course of a few weeks, these concept artists generate hundreds of images, exploring the look and feel of every aspect of the world—its people, its places, and its monsters.
4. ***World Guide.*** Taking the prewriting and the visual concepts, the creative lead and the art director for the block put together the world guide. This collaboration results in art and text that fit seamlessly together and reinforce each other and the card mechanics, creating a totally coherent world. The finished world guide goes to every artist, writer, designer, and developer who works on cards in the block.



What stands out about these cards? As with every Magic card, the art.

Bringing It All Together

Over its many years, Magic's gameplay and its art and story have been tied together to varying degrees. The very earliest expansions, including *Arabian Nights* and *The Dark*, were very much "flavor-first" creations, designed to capture a specific place or tone. Later sets, like *Urza's Saga*, featured almost contradictory elements—the story was built around powerful artificers, but the game mechanics centered almost exclusively on enchantments.

Based on my own experiences as a player, I knew that when done well, resonant, accessible, fantastically flavorful Magic cards and sets were the pinnacle of what the game had to offer. The sets where the words on the cards and the art they depicted were so intertwined as to be inseparable—seemingly impossible to have been created as individual elements, but rather birthed as some perfect whole—draw you in in ways few other games can. So when I was handed the departmental reins in 2007, I made it a mission of mine to get creative and design working together more on sets and worlds that spoke to fantasy fans, with an emphasis on flavor-first card designs that made would bring stories to life as the games were played.

The *Magic 2010 Core Set* was my thesis statement on flavorful design, and close on its heels followed the original *Zendikar* expansion, which layered in resonant adventure-world tropes that gave the card set a strong identity. But the scope of Magic 2010 was small, centered on individual designs and reprints, and *Zendikar*'s original design identity was conceived around the mechanics of land cards. We didn't yet have a purely flavor-first world crafted from its very first moments as a collaboration between creative and game design. That is, until Innistrad, which to me is the best example of unified vision of form and function, art and mechanics, story and gameplay, that has ever existed in Magic, before or since.

Horror Story

Back in 2001 we released a set called *Odyssey*, and it was one of those sets with the aforementioned flavor-gameplay disconnect. The game mechanics were all centered on the graveyard—cards that filled the graveyard, cards that counted the graveyard, spells that could be cast from the graveyard—while the story was about barbarians, squid people, and a corrupt Cabal all on the hunt for a magical wish-fulfilling orb.

Later iterations of Magic's design and creative teams lamented *Odyssey*'s setting as a huge missed opportunity to do a horror setting—something that actually fit with the graveyard theme—and creative director Brady Dommermuth and head designer Mark Rosewater both yearned to right that wrong. As fate would have it, several years after the release of *Odyssey*, horror as a genre clawed its way back into the mainstream, with novels, movies, and TV series about werewolves, vampires, and zombies becoming very popular. So when Mark was drawing up his multiyear plan for Magic block themes, he included "gothic horror" on his list.



With cards like these, a release date near Halloween was the obvious choice.

The original plan, after it had been vetted up the chain all the way to the company's executives, was that the gothic horror set would be a "one-and-done" interlude, a disconnected large set in the spring of 2012 on the heels of a two-set block based on some game mechanic that has been lost to memory. The feeling was that there wasn't enough material to design more than a single set around horror, which is rather ironic given that this book commemorates the fifth Magic expansion set in Innistrad. What got the horror set moved to the fall 2011 slot, where it would eventually blossom into the *Innistrad* we know and love, was not any change of heart regarding confidence or depth of material, but the belief that if we were going to attempt a horror set, releasing it nearer to Halloween would give it the best chance to succeed. What a great decision that turned out to be!



Magic creator Richard Garfield infused Innistrad with a chaotic element that added to the sense of foreboding and dread.

When Mark's design team began in earnest, there were a couple of interesting people involved. The first was Jenna Helland, a creative writer who would go on to eventually manage the Magic story team. Jenna's involvement in the design showed the dedication to getting story and flavor details right from the beginning, a practice that has been made part of our normal way of constructing design teams since. (*Innistrad* also marked the first time a creative writer was made part of the development—or "final design"—team as well, with Adam Lee breaking ground in that role—another change that would become de rigueur.) But the headline designer joining Mark and Jenna was none other than Richard Garfield himself, the creator of *Magic: The Gathering* and progenitor of the trading card game genre, back working on a set for the first time since *Ravnica: City of Guilds*. Richard is a fan of flavorful design as well as embracing chaos, and his contributions are among the most offbeat of the set. Any set that Richard is involved in promises to be something special, and *Innistrad* did not fail to deliver.

Key Ingredients

One of the first things the design team nailed down were the various groups of creatures—what we call "tribes" in Magic. The gothic horror genre came with lots of built-in expectations; some, like vampires and zombies, were no-brainers. Others, like mummies and cosmic eldritch beings, were left out to keep the scope narrower and the setting focused in something that felt Northern European. Werewolves were one tribe that Mark Rosewater in particular wanted to do justice to in the set, as Magic had only ever had three Werewolf cards up to that point, all of which were forgettable.

The problem with this suite of creatures was that all of them have been traditionally used on black cards—every Vampire printed to that point had been black, as had the handful of Werewolves and a huge percentage of the Zombies. Not wanting to make a black-heavy set, the design team proposed some new directions. Zombies would be blue in addition to black, with the blue ones representing "built" zombies, like Frankenstein's monster, and black representing those raised from the dead. Vampires would branch out into red, which gave them aggressive and hedonistic traits. Ghosts—labeled as "Spirits" on cards—had shown up in other colors in the game previously, and fit neatly in white and blue, with the former being benevolent, and the latter being more mischievous and sinister. Werewolves were moved to red and green,

which more heavily emphasized their wild and feral nature. The protagonists of the story, the Humans, were branched out of white into green as well, giving the set five main tribes, each anchored in an allied color pair.



Humans, Zombies, and Vampires branched out into other colors to make the design of Innistrad work.

Giving Werewolves some new colors to work with didn't solve the problem of how to design them. Dual-state cards are difficult to make in Magic, as you typically only get to display one piece of art and one set of statistics, and then describe with words how the other state is achieved. Various attempts at designing Werewolves in this way proved unsatisfying, but another Wizards of the Coast game provided an out-of-the-box solution. *DuelMasters*, a Japanese trading card game that many Magic designers also work on, had used cards with game info and art on both sides to great success, and *Innistrad*, with its need to show transformation on so many cards, seemed just the place to try them in Magic. On the one hand, double-faced cards were an incredibly elegant solution—they told story well, they very viscerally showed transformation—but on the other hand, they were challenging and more than a little scary to implement.

To that point, we had never made a game card that didn't have the official, very recognizable, Magic card back. Did our printers have the capabilities to make these? Did they work in the rules? Would our players accept them? Did you have to play them using sleeves? With so many questions surrounding them, their inclusion in the set was often in doubt. But I loved the idea instantly, so I, with many others in R&D and elsewhere in the organization, worked hard to hammer out every detail.

The end result was stunning—they felt like Magic cards, but so much more. Each one was like a little movie, a two-panel comic strip, often with surprise endings. And they gave Werewolves an identity that was, in a word, perfect.

The third piece of the design puzzle was the one that led us to gothic horror in the first place—the graveyard. The **flashback** keyword, which lets you recast spells from the graveyard, was imported from the progenitor *Odyssey* set. A new mechanic—**morbid**—was created that cared about creatures dying. A subtheme of filling your own graveyard for the benefit of assembling more powerful Zombies was built into that tribe's game plan. Using all these tools, lead developer Erik Lauer was able to craft and tune a draft environment with incredible texture and replayability that is his magnum opus, cited to this day as the favorite play environment of huge numbers of players.



The front and back of a double-faced Werewolf card. The set contained 20 different double-faced cards.



A sample of the familiar horror tropes brought to life on cards.

Joining tribes, double-faced cards, and graveyard mechanics was my favorite design ingredient that made *Innistrad* so successful, the individually flavorful card designs, such as Wooden Stake and Creepy Doll. We've adopted the term "top-down design" for cards made like these, where the design starts with a concept and the card is built around it, as opposed to beginning with a game mechanic that must later be justified through a name and illustration. Initial design meetings for the set featured whiteboards and wiki pages chock full of "genre tropes" that would potentially make interesting cards. With such a rich tapestry of source material, from the penny dreadfuls of Victorian England to modern movies like *The Fly*, there was something recognizable and resonant for everyone.

These are the cards that make the game great. What lurks behind the Cellar Door, perhaps an Army of the Damned? Dare you read the Grimoire of the Dead? What's more frightening, an Invisible Stalker or the Village Cannibals? Everyone knows the tropes of the vampire becoming a bat, the little girl possessed by demons, and the noble slayer that relentlessly hunts the undead, but to have them come to life in a game of Magic? Sublime.

After the Horror

Innistrad was followed up in early 2012 with a smaller set called *Dark Ascension* that continued the story. The humans of the world were even further imperiled by the growing hordes of monsters. That growing sense of doom was captured mechanically by the **fateful hour** ability, and the relentlessness of the dark creatures appeared as the keyword **undying**, in addition to all the familiar ingredients of the first set.

From there, the story took a brighter turn. The spring 2012 set was called *Avacyn Restored*, and it told the tale of the release of Innistrad's protector, the guardian angel Avacyn, from the moon-silver prison of the Helvault. Avacyn and her hosts of angels beat back the darkness, restoring balance to the plane of Innistrad. That set featured the mind-blowing **miracle** mechanic, which allowed powerful spells to be cast for far less mana than normal the moment they were drawn from the top of the deck.



The stories of Innistrad continued through several products, including Dark Ascension, Avacyn Restored, Commander 2014, and Magic Origins.



Delirium and madness creep into every corner. The archangel has gone mad, and the world begins twisting grotesquely. What causes these Shadows over Innistrad?

All three sets of the *Innistrad* block were huge successes, and players yearned for more. Over the next few years, we sprinkled elements of *Innistrad* into other products as well as we could—the morbid mechanic returned in *Conspiracy*, the oft-quoted necromancers Gisa and Geralf headlined decks in *Commander 2014*, and double-faced cards gave us the perfect tool to show how our key planeswalker characters got their sparks in *Magic Origins*. But we knew that one day we'd want to come back to Innistrad as the setting for an entire Magic block.

Night Comes Again

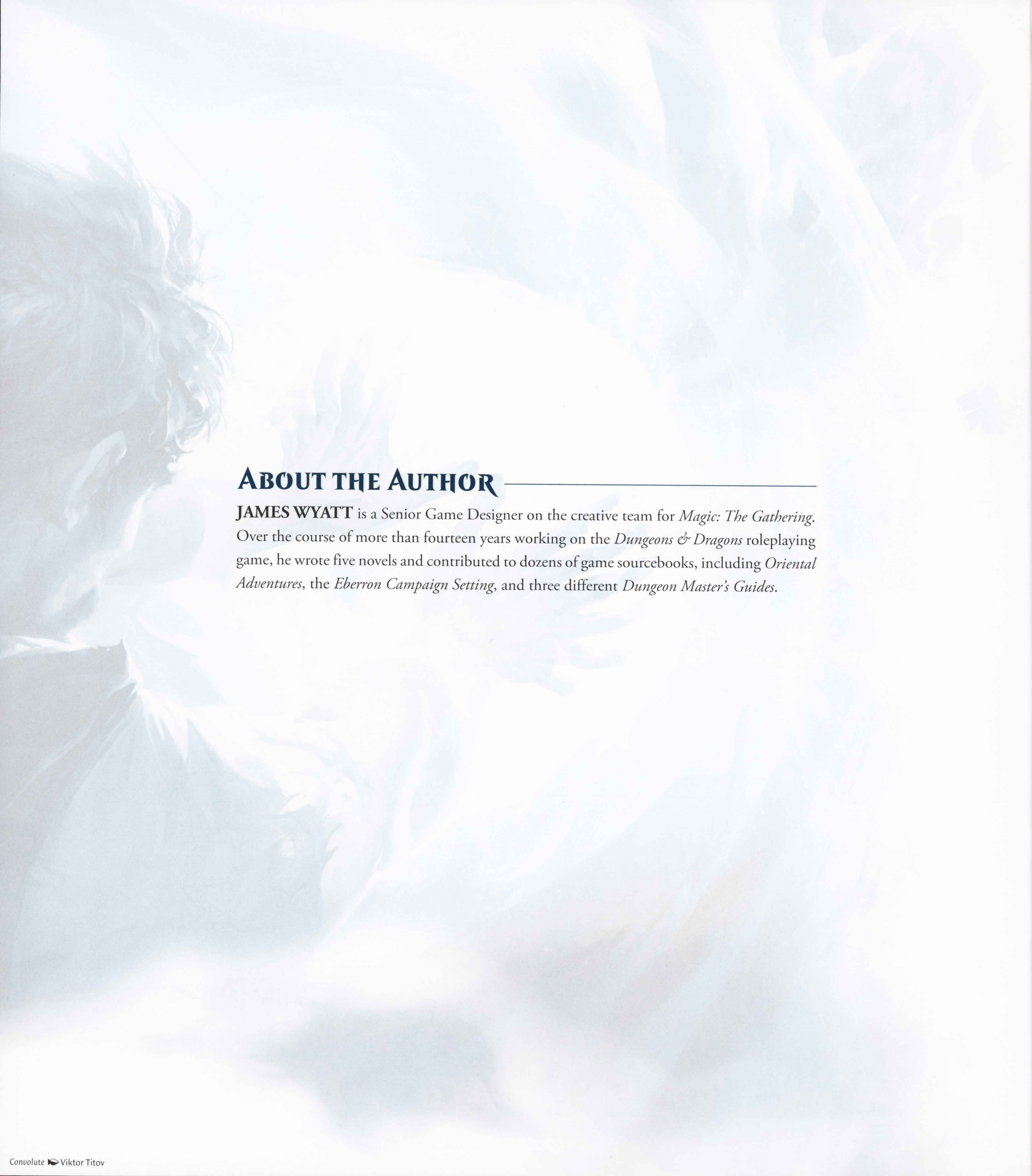
Which brings us to today. Darkness has crept back into Innistrad. Avacyn, the once-beloved protector, has been driven to madness.

It might not be a pleasant place to live again, but Innistrad makes for an exceptional setting for Magic expansions. *Shadows over Innistrad*, designed and developed by teams headed up by Mark Gottlieb and Dave Humpherys respectively, returns all the favorite elements of the original, from the five main tribes to the double-faced cards, from the clever top-down designs to the intricate graveyard interactions. But there are a few new twists thrown in.

The **madness** and **delirium** mechanics provide new gameplay challenges, but also hint at something sinister afflicting Innistrad and its denizens. The planeswalker Jace has come here to seek answers, and you get to follow in his footsteps with the Clue tokens created by the **investigate** mechanic.

Where does all this lead? Why, to *Eldritch Moon*, of course. The best part of the tale is yet to be told. I, for one, am excited to be along for the ride. We've had four card sets based in Innistrad so far with a fifth on the horizon, and I will be thrilled and proud to show relatives and classmates cards from all of them, for years to come.

Even if I didn't actually paint any of them.



About the Author

JAMES WYATT is a Senior Game Designer on the creative team for *Magic: The Gathering*. Over the course of more than fourteen years working on the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game, he wrote five novels and contributed to dozens of game sourcebooks, including *Oriental Adventures*, the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, and three different *Dungeon Master's Guides*.

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